



Mushoku Tensei Redundancy

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Marriage of Norn

Chapter 1: Norn's Marriage — First Part

Part 1

It's been several months since the conclusion of the battle of the Biheiril Kingdom.

Since then, Hitogami has stayed silent, and the days went by without any enemy presence.

That said, what I have to do hasn't changed.

To prepare for Laplace's revival in 80 years, I've been silently moving around, making various arrangements.

But lately, I've been home a lot.
Because both Eris and Roxy got pregnant at the same time.

It has to be because I let loose after Gisu was defeated.
And my disorderly daily life was the result.
Of course, the result itself is something joyous.
But during pregnancy, their fates are weakened and they are easier targets for Hitogami.
I would also like to spend as much time as possible with my wives during their pregnancy.

And so, for the first time in a while, family time has continued.
By organising the information gathered by the Mercenary Groups established in various places, regular meetings were held where Orsted went through the information to determine our future course of action.

On one of those days...
On that day, together with Orsted, we were going over the information on the next country that I would be visiting.
The next king of that country was still young but he was already a remarkable figure, and I was supposed to approach him with the intention of taking

advantage of him.

Orsted didn't say what would cause the next king to fall, he kept silent. He probably has some reason. Is the person that would cause that King's fall not in the current loop?

Originally, we were supposed to meet him later on, at this point, is there any surefire way to topple him?

And so, how should I move?

Orsted said he'd look at his memo relating to him and think of a method.

And that was when it happened.

"Let Norn Greyrat get married."

"Wha.....?"

Sudden.

Orsted suddenly broke the silence by saying something insane.

I, who am normally very careful about my words around Orsted, almost unintentionally leaked out the line: "The hell you saying all of a sudden?"

Right now, we were thinking about how we would cause this remarkable figure to fall.

There was no logical link at all.

Is what I thought.

But no, maybe there wasn't absolutely no link.

There was one possible answer.

"...A political marriage?"

Going by the flow of the conversation, to cause the remarkable figure to fall... that's what we would do.

"Not as a political maneuver, I was thinking about the future."

Nevertheless, it is a painful topic.

Orsted had decided that I would move towards this man with the intention of having him win her heart.

Well that's fine for now.

It's not as if I don't have confidence in this person.

I just don't believe that this remarkable man of lineage could win her heart.

The man is a womanizer on the level of Paul, if we can't find a woman to allot to him, I would have to consent to Orsted's suggestion.

That said.

Norn is out of the question.

Norn will eventually get married.

But, Paul was a peerless womanizer, handing Norn over to the same kind of man is no good.

Norn's partner would need to be someone more sincere.

And somebody that I can accept.

I won't hand Norn over to some useless nobody.

I wouldn't be able to face Paul.

No matter how noble their objective, I will not forgive those who use and discard their family.

"Not like that."

"Then what did you mean?"

"I am indebted to Norn Greyrat's child."

"Debt...? So it's not Norn that you are interested in, but her child, whom you have business with?"

"It's not business. In this loop, it's not all that important."

It was not a very pertinent conversation.

Not being able to read Orsted's true intentions was not a new thing.

But up until now, I've at least been able to determine what he was trying to do.

Groundwork for the future.

Norn's child isn't important, but because in a previous loop he/she was useful, he would like to set the groundwork.

"I understand."

I stood up.

He looked up at me while sitting.

He's not currently wearing his helmet. His face is scary as always but, but I'm sure right now it's even more frightening.

"If it must be so by all means, would it be permissible to meet at noon in the forest to the north of here in three days time?"

Norn, rest easy.
I will protect your chastity,
Even if the opponent is Orsted, I will not pull back a single step.
So Paul... lend me your strength.
I ask you for the power to overcome this mighty enemy and return home alive.

“Wait. You are misunderstanding something.”
“Misunderstanding?”
“During the countless 200 years I have repeated, I have become attached to certain persons’ existences.
Norn Greyrat’s child is one such existence.
She has helped me on countless occasions, I am indebted to her.
Therefore, if it is possible, I would like to meet her in this lifetime.
Because as it is, it will not happen.”

It’s true that there’s no male presence around Norn.
That didn’t change even after her graduation.
She has her family, but she isn’t jobless.
On the recommendation of the school, she entered the Magic Guild and is now working at the main office.
She is what you would call an “Office Lady.”

There are a considerable number of men in the Magic Guild.
But there is no male presence around Norn.
She doesn’t go out on her days off and spends all her time at home helping out by looking after the kids or doing housework.
Even during her schooldays, she had no one special that she associated with.
I thought Norn would eventually but, honestly, if it goes on this way, it seems like she might spend her whole life without getting married.

“...”

In this world, for those of certain positions, arranged marriages are a common practice.
It may be half-hearted, but I am technically a man of notable position with both influence and connections.
With that being the case, this development isn’t all that odd.

“...No, a child isn’t something you can make on your own.
The same person couldn’t be born no matter who the partner is.”

The King of a country would have a high enough standing.
But I do not intend to acknowledge it.
Until I see it with my own eyes, and confirm what kind of person they are.

“That aside, was this remarkable figure originally Norn’s partner?”

While I was thinking that, Orsted scrunched his face up in confusion and raised his eyebrows.
As always his face is scary.

But I remember this face, it’s the “The hell you saying all of a sudden” face.
He opened his mouth and his suppressed eyebrows moved.

“No... Sorry. That has nothing to do with this.”
“Huh?”
“This is a different story.”

A different story...
Then it’s that.

“It’s not about conquering the next kingdom? You were simply saying to let Norn get married at the time of her choosing?”
“That’s how it is.”

Right.
I get it now, that makes sense.

“Orsted-sama.”
“Yes?”
“When you are changing the subject of the conversation, please say something along the lines of “I’m changing the subject of the conversation.” or “That aside,” it would be good for you to preface such conversations like this.”
“Right. I’ll be more careful next time.”

After putting everything back in place, I sat back down.

Part 2

After I pulled myself together, the conversation continued.

“So, just who was Norn’s partner?

Norn married this person each and every time, didn’t she?”

“Yes, as far as I know, Norn’s partner is predetermined.”

Norn’s fated partner.

What a lucky guy.

Simply by existing, to have the good fortune of being able to marry Norn.

If he spends his days lazing around, I’ll kidnap him and fix it.

Spartan training.

From dawn till dusk, I’ll force it into him.

Until his body can say nothing but, ‘Yes’, ‘Absolutely’ and “Thank you very much, cheating will not be tolerated.

The condition will be, let’s see... If he would like to become Norn’s partner, he would at least have to be able to stay conscious after taking a punch from Eris.

“It’s Ruijerd Supardia.”

My thoughts stopped.

Inside my head, I remembered the face of a bald warrior who had lived for over 500 years.

No, he’s not bald anymore.

He is a respectable man with a with splendid green hair.

“Their child is the last warrior of the supard race.

Continuing the will of Ruijerd after he had fallen to the plague, reclaiming the Supard’s honour by joining the humans side in the fight against Laplace and delivering the final blow.

It was a huge burden that anybody would recognize...

But this time around, the Supard race remains in large numbers.

That child will most likely not have to be burdened with this duty.”

While I was still arranging my thoughts, Orsted finished his explanation.

He was probably remembering that child’s whole life.

If she defeated Laplace, that means that she most likely co-operated with Orsted.

Which means, right, for Orsted to make this kind of proposal, I do understand it.

“...”

But, well.

This time is different

I'm here, there was also the Teleport Incident.

I don't know how Ruijerd and Norn got to know each other in the other loops,

But there is no mistake that this is a love story that Orsted is well aware of.

If I were to suddenly approach Norn with talks of marriage she would most likely just turn me down.

After all, he's 500 years old.

Ruijerd would probably be bewildered too.

Having Ruijerd as a relative definately wouldn't be a bad thing.

But this definitely isn't something for me to decide.

Umu.

“...I think that Norn's feeling are the most important.”

“That's right. There's no need to rush.”

Orsted said that and nodded in agreement.

Part 3

After that, I had Orsted tell me Norn's story from the previous loops.

In a world without me, it seems Norn became an adventurer.

She sang songs and wrote stories while adventuring; a singing, dancing, fighting, minstrel. She formed a party with those of similar interests, and journeyed towards the northern continent.

Although neither her swordsmanship nor her magic were, by any means, outstanding.

By adventurer standards she was at best a B grade.

And so, during a certain request, her party was annihilated by a demonic creature.

Norn was also on the verge of death.

What appeared then was our Ruijerd.

He beat down the approaching demonic creature and freed Norn from her

predicament.

And to Norn, Ruijerd was love at first sight.

And from then on, she accompanied Ruijerd on his journey to find the Supard race, and slowly began her attack.

Apparently Ruijerd ignored her advances at first, but after he discovered that the Supard race had been wiped out by a plague, he fell into despair.

Norn devoted herself to comforting the anguished Ruijerd, he was moved by her affection, and the two got married.

The two of them began their life together in a corner of the Biheilil kingdom.

And during that time, while Norn was pregnant with their child, Ruijerd fell sick with the same illness that struck the Supard race and died.

Norn, now alone, took upon herself, the responsibility of raising the child, and eventually her life came to an end.

I thought it sounded like a lonely end, but according to Orsted, Norn looked satisfied on her deathbed.

It was an unexpected and unlikely love story, but with the two of them, nothing would be strange.

That said, I wonder how Norn and Ruijerd would get together without such a chain of events.

Would Norn be happy, being paired with somebody she didn't love?

Would Ruijerd accept?

“ ... ”

Well, there's no point to me toiling over it alone.

What's important are Norn's feelings.

There may be no male presence around Norn, but she is at that age.

She's got to have a man or two she likes, having been in a relationship or two wouldn't be odd.

No, it may just be that I don't know, she may already have herself a man.

And one day, all of a sudden, she might bring a man to the house and he would ask me “Father-in-law, please give your daughter to me”.

And then I would reply “Who's this ‘Father-in-law’”.

And then: “I am ‘brother-in-law’” ...

I got sidetracked.

Anyhow, I must first hear Norn's feelings.

At these times, I get the feeling that this isn't something I should hear.
I also don't think it's something that Norn would tell me.

A woman would be better.

But Aisha is no good.

I feel like if Aisha hears this it'll turn into something bad.

Which means, it would have to be Sylphy or maybe Roxy.
Norn seems to respect Roxy in particular, Roxy would be good.

On the subject of admiration, Eris would also be good.
Eris had been teaching Norn the sword for quite a while.
Ever since Norn graduated, she's been going jogging and doing practice swings with Eris every morning.
It's clear to see that Norn looks up to her.

But with Eris's commando personality, telling her to "Ask indirectly" would be impossible.

It would have to be Roxy.

No wait, Someone with a high skill level at "Asking indirectly" would be Sylphy.
She looks up to Sylphy in a slightly different sense than admiration, but at the very least, she does recognise that she's the most important member of the household.

No, I should probably discuss it with all three present.
Four with me included, and we can decide who would be most suited.
It would be good to hear Sylphy and Roxy's opinions.
Wait, wait, not just the three of them, would it be better to bring Lillia and Zenith in on it too?

"..."

I was sitting on the living room sofa, thinking about it by myself when...
Into my field of vision jumped a single woman.

"Ah."

It's Norn.
Norn walked into the Living room.

“Nii-san, I’m home.”

“...Welcome back.”

When you take a good look, all said, Norn is actually quite the beauty. She looks a lot like Zenith when she was young. Her breasts are large and she’s got silky blonde hair. Even at school she was popular.

“...What is it?”

“No... Ah, Norn, you want some tea?”

“I’ll have some.”

I took a cup from the table and poured out some black tea and handed it to her.

Norn took the cup and looked puzzled.

“...It’s cold now.”

“Eeh!”

Even though I just had Lillia brew it? I thought that and touched the teapot, and it was indeed cold. The cup in my hand was also cold. I wonder what happened. Are we under some kind of attack!?

“...Huh? Norn, that reminds me, don’t you have work today?”

“I just got home from there now.”

I took a look out the window and it was already evening. After I returned from my meeting with Orsted and had Lillia brew me some tea, it was early afternoon, which means that around two hours have passed.

“Ah, sorry, it seems I spaced out.”

“Please save the spacing out for when you’re older... I’ll go make some fresh tea. You wait here.”

“...Huh? Is no one else here?”

Until a little while ago, Sylphy and Eris were still here. And Roxy should also be home around this time.

“I walked past Sylphy-Neesan and Eris-Neesan on my way home, they were

taking the kids for a walk. Lillia-san was shopping.”

“...Aisha?”

“I don’t know. Wouldn’t she probably still be with the mercenary group?”

As she said that, Norn walked into the kitchen with the Teapot.

But is that right, nobody else is here.

It’s just Norn and I...

Couldn’t this be called some kind of perfect situation.

Hm.

Avoid a roundabout wordy conversation and tell her to her face.

And if that should fail, I’ll try something else.

That would be the option most faithful to Norn.

Hmm. Hmm.

Talking to her only after I had removed all the obstacles, Norn wouldn’t like that.

After all, it’s her that’s getting married.

I’ll hear it from Norn first.

“Here you go.”

“Thanks.”

As I thought that, Norn had returned and placed a teacup in front of me. I sat right in front of Norn and drank from the cup.

“You’ve gotten quite good at making tea.”

“I learnt it in school after all.”

“Not from Lillia-san?”

“Lillia-san... probably wouldn’t teach me.”

Rather than not teaching you, she’d most likely tell you to ‘Let me do it’.

“If you asked, I think she’d still teach you.”

“Probably, but they had a class at school, so I thought I might as well learn it there. Also, there aren’t many opportunities to make tea at home, but there are plenty at school.”

“That’s true.”

Like at the student council and in her dorm room.

Maybe even at work.

Well, it's just something Norn decided herself.

"..."

We're having a casual conversation to warm up to the topic, but I would like to cut right to it.

What should I say.

What do I talk about.

"Ah-... Ahem...."

"..."

I cleared my throat and Norn gave me a puzzled look.

"...Is there something missing?"

"No, not that, hmm. The tea is good."

I said that and took another sip of the steaming tea.

It wasn't particularly great, but at the same time it's not bad enough to spit out.

It's very Norn-like, mediocre tea.

Good, but not skilled, that kind of feeling.

In other words, it's good.

That aside...

"Lately, Norn, recently... How's it been?"

"How what been?"

"Hmm, for instance, how about work?"

"Everything's normal. While being taught by my senpai, I've been doing the jobs I'm capable of. But, I'm sure if it was Aisha, she'd be far better than me."

"Stop comparing yourself to Aisha."

I said that and Norn nodded.

Aisha does a different kind of work.

You shouldn't compare yourself to someone doing a different job.

"And, your senpai... are they that? Are they cool?"

"They're super pretty. You've talked to them once before as well Nii-san. When I was the student council president, they was the vice-president."

"...That tough beast race one?"

“Not him, the girl.”

Right, the woman.

I get it.

I don't remember her name, but there was definitely someone like that.

Now that I think about it, when she was looking for a job, I remember having a conversation like that.

Like that they had entered the same department.

“Right, a girl... I wonder if there are any male senpai?”

“There are.”

“Those male senpai... Are there any good looking ones?”

“There are some good looking ones, and some who aren't as well.”

There seems to be someone cool.

That's important.

“Nii-san, what have you been wanting to say?”

“Calm down Norn. Don't jump to any conclusions.”

“It looks like you're the one that need to calm down.”

I am calm.

I'm always, Cool, Clever and Clean.

Rudeus of the three C's.

Never Crazy, that word is not in there.

“So, Norn... Ahem, Say, if, um, do you think, this cool person, is, uh, cool?”

“You're wondering if I like him?”

“Do you like him?”

Ahh, dammit.

I suddenly jumped straight to the point.

“I don't particularly like him.”

Hey, mama yo!

“Then do you have somebody you like?”

“.....There is.”

There is!

She answered, now, in the flow of the conversation!

She answered me honestly.

She gave me an answer.

“Yes, right! There is, well you’re at that age. So there is someone, there’s nothing odd about that. Yes.”

“But you were most definitely odd just then.”

“What are you saying.”

There’s nothing odd about me.

What’s odd is this world.

This world is wrong. Don’t you agree.

“So, what kind of person are they? The person you like.”

“...He’s older.”

“Hmm.”

“And reliable.”

“MmmHmm.”

“And he’s always looking out for me.”

He fulfils all three conditions.

“Could it be me?”

“Are you half-asleep?”

I’m sorry.

I got ahead of myself.

“He’s far older than you, Nii-san, and even in this situation he would be calm; he is a composed man of presence.”

“You know, your brother, recently, hasn’t been getting flustered at all.”

“Please remember your manner from a few minutes ago.”

Grrr...

But, hmm, far older than me, a man of presence. Dammit.

“Far older... Is that more than 10 years?”

“Even more.”

“...I didn’t expect you to be into old men.”

“To say I’m ‘into old men’... Well I will admit that I like men older than me.”

Even more would be more than 20 years older than me.
Meaning 40 or 50 years old.
And on top of that, having a presence, he might be rather plump.
A lower centre of gravity would cause a sense of stability and presence.

“ ... ”

The corrupt head of some trading company or some sly greasy old man, was the image that floated into my mind.

I don't intend to criticise because of an age difference, but I can only see this man as some kind of sugar daddy.

I won't acknowledge it, I definitely won't acknowledge something like that.
But if this greasy old man turns out to be surprisingly sincere... Then the age difference is of no concern.

You can't judge a book by its cover.

“But I understand that it's a love that is not meant to be.”

“Not meant to be... Is he married?”

“No... His wife is already gone...”

She's already dead.

Or perhaps divorced.

It's possible that he simply had a letter of divorce thrust before him.

Wait, I seem to have gotten forcefully sidetracked, what if...

“But apparently, I'm quite similar to his dead wife.”

Aah, then I'm definitely wrong.

I would have to be wrong.

That man wouldn't say such a thing.

“That's a pretty cliché pick-up line.”

To get a hold of someone much younger than you, saying that ‘you're similar to my wife’, of course it's a cliché pick-up line.

It brings in the possibility of marriage.

No, wait, now that I think about it, it doesn't sound like a pick-up line.

You're completely different to my wife, this is the first time I've met someone like you, something like that sounds much closer to a pick-up line.

“Eeh... I’m being picked up?”

Norn’s brought her hands to her cheeks they became somewhat red.
She’s happy about being picked up.

Right, it’s not the other party, Norn is the one that likes him.

But there’s still the possibility that Norn is being tricked.

But I’m sure that if I said that to Norn right now it’d start a fight, so I wont.

“Anyway, why did you ask something like that so suddenly?”

“Eh? No, umm.”

“You must have some kind of reason.”

Norn began to scowl at me.

She’s talked with me honestly until now, so I should also answer honestly, is the kind of face she’s giving me right now.

I didn’t think you’d talk with me honestly to this point.

But I just wanted to confirm if she had someone that she likes.

“...It might be awkward to say this after the conversation we just had.”

“Yes.”

Norn, who had been leant forward until now, sat back slightly.

“The truth is Norn, talk about your engagement has come up.”

After hearing that, Norn froze for several seconds.

Eye’s wide open and mouth turned down at the corners.

She carefully examined me.

“A marriage proposal... I understand. I’ll accept it.”

“No, I get it. Don’t say any more, let’s pretend this conversation never happened.”

“No, like I said, I’ll accept.”

I looked at Norn.

She looked quite suspicious of me if I do say so myself.

“...Don’t you have someone you like?”

“That’s fine. It’s a love that can’t be after all.

I’m not a noble, but since Nii-san is in some kind of position of nobility, I thought this kind of conversation would happen eventually, I’ve heard it from

people I know as well.

From when I heard that you were making connections with other countries, I assumed I would be used this way.”

“Don’t say things like being used. I have no intention of using my family like tools.”

In response to my rather strong tone, Norn was taken aback and apologised.

“Right... I’m sorry.”

She’s an honest girl.

“Norn, if you say you don’t like it, we can forget this conversation happened.”

“No... I’m not particularly against it. The fact that you’d even bring the conversation to me means that they’re definitely not someone I’d hate, right?.”

“Well, yeah.”

I don’t think he’s someone you’d hate...

After the battle at the Biheilil Kingdom the two seemed to get along.

No matter where he is, Ruijerd is an sincere man.

Well, I still haven’t gotten Ruijerd’s acknowledgement yet.

But he probably wouldn’t object.

“But... Hmm. It’s not as if I absolutely want to get married, but it’s not as if I don’t either.

If you say that it’s ok then I would like to take you up on your offer of ignoring this talk.

But if you insist, I wouldn’t mind continuing the conversation.”

Norn said that and averted her eyes.

Like I thought, she doesn’t particularly want to get married.

It’s only that she’d do what I say.

That may be something good for me, but for Norn, it’s not.

“No, I haven’t even talked to the other party. So It’s alright.”

“Is that right... Thank you very much.”

If Norn says that, Orsted probably won’t be too happy about it.

“...Ahh, by the way, what kind of person were they? The king of some country? Some Asuran Noble?”

“They aren’t Royalty or Nobility... It’s somebody you know.”

“Somebody I know...? Aah, Was it Zanoba-senpai by any chance?”

“I don’t think that guy would be interested in marriage.”

Zanoba is something else.

He exuberates such a lovey dovey atmosphere around Juli but he doesn’t seem to be getting any closer to Ginger.

He probably intends to remain married to his dolls for life.

“It’s Ruijerd.”

I told her the name of the partner.

“...”

By the time I had realised, Norn had placed her hands on the table and bent forward.

She had a serious face.

Her face was red and she seemed angry.

I wonder if I hurt her feelings.

Norn looks up to Ruijerd with respect, but as I thought, it’s not like that. Yeah. Sorry, Nii-san was mistaken.

“We-well, of course it’s a no. Putting aside the difference in race, the age gap is just too big, even you—”

“Nii-san! Please proceed with that engagement!”

Norn cut off my words, without concealing the excitement and joy from her voice.

Part 4

After all that.

Or should I say, as expected.

It seems the person Norn liked was Ruijerd.

She had looked up to him ever since she was little.

That admiration from childhood eventually grew into love, and the incident in the Biheilil Kingdom re-awoke it.

I like this person.

But after hearing about his past, she was convinced that she couldn't be with him, and decided to hide her feelings.

“I understand leave it to your Onii-chan.”

After hearing all that, I hit my chest.

—○●○—

Author Q&A

Q: Before you said it would be 1–2 chapter in a month and now it's 2 in one day!

You always exceed expectations. Magonote-san salute!

A: Although for now, the first three chapters are just Norn's story.

After that's over it'll be around another month.

I return you're salute.

Q: Returning to the「In a Sense」

I have waited.

A: Rather than a return, I would like you to think of it as an end-game event.

Q: Guehehe... Marraige?

Onii-chan will always support you!

Becoming a bride is unthinkable!

Is what I had thought..._(「ε:」)_

A: To begin with, Rudeus is also a married person.

Q: Is such an older brother alright?

I have a bad feeling lol

A feeling of fruitless effort...!

It's a problem, Rudeus doesn't at all feel reliable.

Very unreliable.

A: Is this what you take away from 2,800,000 characters!

Q: Norn-chan's wedding... This is... Teren-san reads this... wouldn't it turn into something bad?

A: Let those who will sing, sing.

Chapter 2: Norn's Marriage — Second Part

Part 1

Leave it to me.

I said that and began the preparations for the marriage.

Norn has given an affirmative response, the problem lies on Ruijerd's side. He is an adult. If I asked him to marry my sister, he would most likely agree to it. Thinking logically, marrying my family is also to the benefit of the Supard race. Objectively, looking at my title, I am a trusted retainer of the Dragon God. Since ancient times, marriage has been a way of deepening strength of an alliance.

With Ruijerd and Norn's marriage, the Supard race won't oppose the Dragon God faction, and we would no longer have to cast them away.

That's the proposal I have prepared.

It is a happy proposal.

But is that really alright?

Would that make Norn happy?

If Ruijerd married her thinking "It can't be helped", would Norn be satisfied?

When she realises that she isn't loved back, she will most likely break into tears.

Ruijerd is currently in Biheilil Kingdom, in charge of negotiations.

Which means that Norn wouldn't live in the Magic City Sharia any longer and would move to the Supard village.

After the incident in the Biheilil Kingdom, the whole village knows her name and face,

So the villagers would most likely accept her.

But, while living with a race other than your own, the common sense and daily lifestyle would be different. Would Norn be able to make a good living?

Worst case, Norn would be ostracised from the villagers.

I'm worried.

Very worried.

I asked my three wives for advice on the issue:

Roxy said: "If it's Norn, she'll be fine."

Eris said: "If it's Ruijerd, she'll be fine."

Sylphy said: "You're overthinking this."

But I am still worried.

I cannot allow Norn to meet with misfortune.

If Norn were to spend her days crying, Paul would glare at me in my dreams, and Zenith would be standing at my bedside slapping me awake from my peaceful sleep.

For both their sake, I must make sure Norn is on the road to happiness. Anything after that is up to Norn herself.

Of course, I understand that Ruijerd is a man worthy of my faith. Even if he didn't love Norn from the bottom of his heart, I know that he would treat his wife properly.

He would care for her in a way that would never cause her to cry.

But I still have to confirm this with Ruijerd. No matter how much Ruijerd might not love Norn. Even if I must prepare some kind of event to have them get along better. It should be possible to have Ruijerd's feelings for Norn turn around. And then everything should reach a Happy End.

"...Alright."

And so, with that, I arrived at the Supard village in Biheilil Kingdom.

The Supard village, a few months into reconstruction, already looked complete.

The village was surrounded by large trees and on the inside, houses were lined up in rows. They hadn't harvested yet, but there were crops growing in the field.

When the Supard warriors saw me, they bowed their heads and kindly led me into the village.

After I gave an appropriate greeting in response, we quickly made our way to Ruijerd's house.

Of course, it was a new building.

Ruijerd held a rather significant standing in this village, so his house was large. Yup, it's more than enough for two people to live.

"...Ruijerd-san, are you in?"

"Oh, Rudeus."

Ruijerd was inside.

It seemed he had just finished eating, he was sitting next to the fire place in the centre of the room with his eyes closed in some kind of state of meditation.

"..."

I went and sat down in front of him in seiza.

Ruijerd opened his eyes and gave me a puzzled look.

"...What's wrong?"

As he asked me, I turned my palm towards Ruijerd.

"Please wait a minute, I'm still choosing my words."

"...Alright."

And so I kept my silence.

While sitting there staring at the flickering fire, it felt like nearly an hour had passed.

It may sound odd, but I couldn't think of anything to start with.

I know what I must say.

Ruijerd's feeling for Norn.

Whether he likes her or dislikes her and what he thinks of her a marriage partner.

But I don't know how to word it.

How about:

'How do you feel about marrying Norn?'

No, marriage and feelings are separate issues. I can't forget that.

"..."

Ruijerd didn't try to start a conversation with me as I was sitting in silence.

He was waiting for me to start talking.

As if to say that there was absolutely no need to rush, that I should choose my

words at ease.

I don't know whether or not he has some business to take care of, but he probably doesn't have anything to do.

Most likely, he acts this way towards Norn as well.

Or it's possible that Norn may think of this attitude of his a little irritating.

No, probably not.

The very reason Norn fell in love with Ruijerd was because of this particular trait of him.

A partner not bothered by silence is a valuable thing.

Although I'm agonising a little over it now.

"...Right, recently, Norn has been making tea, she's gotten quite good."

"Hmm, Norn's tea."

I said that fishing for a response, and Ruijerd replied.

As I thought, he is somewhat interested in Norn.

So is the first condition clear...?

No, wait, when a man who has been sitting in silence for an hour says something, no matter what it's about, you would reply.

Don't rush.

It's about the flow of the conversation.

"It seems that because she's been making it at her workplace, she's gotten better."

"Is that so... When she came to the village before, it was good."

Ruijerd closed his eyes as if he was remembering something.

Is that so, it seems Ruijerd has already had Norn's tea.

It was good he says.

Putting it like that means that he would probably like to try it again.

Is he thinking something like "I'd like her to make me tea everyday..."?

Damn it, how should I ask him.

I want a choice list.

Is this how Orsted feels when he's talking with me?

Then should I just tell him outright?

How should I do it!? Just how should I ask!?

“It’s not just her tea, her cooking isn’t bad either.”

While I was toiling, the conversation continued.
The conversation kept flowing.
The flow did not stop.

But wait, what did he just say?
Cooking?

“Have you tried it?”
“Yes.”

Norn’s cooking?
Even though I’ve never had it before?

“Is that so...”

I wonder what she made.
Beef stew or curry or omurice or maybe even beef stroganoff.
I want to try it too.
I want to eat it.
No, I have to set myself aside for now.

But in any case, if he likes her cooking then that means it’s not hopeless.
Her cooking won’t make one’s mouth water, but it seems that she’s not that awful.
And after they get married, we won’t be seeing Ruijerd getting slim.

“Is something the matter with Norn?”

While I was thinking, Ruijerd had asked that.
It was a reasonable assumption.
No, I suddenly came in here with a serious face and started talking about Norn,
what I want to talk about should be obvious.

“No... It’s not that anything’s particularly the matter, it was small talk.”

But I’m still lacking the courage, resolve and guts to cut right to the point.
Do you like Norn? Do you love her? Do you immediately want to hold her?
I’m afraid I would hear back: “I don’t think of her like that at all, I can’t
marry her, even if I did I wouldn’t be able to love her.”

And if I did, I'm sure I'd be shocked.

And I'm sure I'd say something like "Just what about Norn doesn't suit you!" and pick a fight.

"It's just that, Norn is also growing up, and she already has a job. She still has plenty of time for children... But there isn't even any kind of male presence around her. I was just wondering if she'll be able to properly get married."

I said that and looked at Ruijerd.

Was that too blunt?

Ruijerd was looking at me suspiciously.

"...Isn't it a custom of the human race for the head of the family to pick marriage partners? Can you not decide who Norn's partner will be?"

"No, no, no, I'm not a noble. I think it would be a good thing for Norn to be able to find her own partner, yes."

I keep taking glances at Ruijerd, but his expression doesn't change.

No, a bit of severity has been added to his suspicious gaze.

Does he think I'm being irresponsible?

"But of course! If Norn comes along and bring back some good for nothing, I would drag him out to a desert and tell him "If you want Norn, you have to defeat me!"

I won't hand Norn over to some useless nobody!"

I make a hurried explanation.

While I push the matter with Norn it would be bad to have him think me to be irresponsible.

I don't know how it will be bad, but it will.

"So basically, if someone would like to marry Norn, they would have to defeat you?"

"No...! Something like that won't always be necessary! But! Just, hmm, right, guts... Yes, they would have to show me that they have the guts to do it."

Someone who would lose their nerve under pressure and run away is no good.

I cannot entrust Norn to someone like that.

I also often lose my nerve, but I at least have no intention of running away.

They must have the guts to still fight even if they know they'll lose.

"Is that right?"

"Yes."

Of course, Ruijerd is good on that front.

I keep glancing at Ruijerd to try and tell him what I mean, but his expression doesn't change.

Just his stone like gaze.

It seems he's not interested in Norn after all.

"..."

Well, of course.

To him, Norn is just a child.

From childhood, he had only known her as a frail little girl.

Ruijerd couldn't hold those kind of passionate feeling for a child. He's just that kind of man.

"Ruijerd-san... I'll get right to the point."

"Ah."

But I still have to hear it.

Even if it's a sad outcome for Norn.

I cannot decide based just on the look on his face

I am also prepared.

"What do you think of Norn?"

"..."

Ruijerd is silent.

He silently stares intensely at me.

His face is like stone, truly intense.

His suspicion completely disappears.

"..."

That's odd.

Normally Ruijerd would immediately reply in this kind of situation.

A child or a warrior.

It should be one of these two.

“...Do you like Norn?”

I am prepared.

The words that will begin it.

It may have been something that I shouldn't have said.

It may have been something that Norn should have said herself.

“I see.”

As Ruijerd uttered those short words, he stood up as if he had decided something, and took his spear into his hand.

“...Rudeus, outside.”

I understood the meaning of that action, and looked up at him.

Towards me still bewildered on the ground, Ruijerd once again, said in a harsh tone:

“Outside.”

“...Yes.”

To that impact, denying a reply, I readily obeyed.

Part 2

We traveled roughly 10 minutes from the Supard village into the forest surrounding the Earth Dragon Valley.

Deep into the Forest.

Here in a small clearing, Ruijerd and I face each other.

“ ... ”

Ruijerd had a stern face the entire time.

I might have made him mad.

After that conversation, it's no surprise that conveying Norn's feeling to him was a failure.

Or he might have just misunderstood.

As some form of political manoeuvre, I was presenting him with Norn.

If it's Ruijerd,
He'd say like a man, "As her brother you must protect Norn. You mustn't use her to curry favour."

It's because he's reliable like that, that I can trust him.

"You already noticed it a while back."

But what came out of Ruijerd's mouth was outside of my predictions.

"...?"

What have I noticed?

I, who am currently standing here in confusion?

I, who cannot even guess what is right by any standard?

"What?"

"Don't say any more, here I come!"

It seems there's no use in talking.

I had no reason to have my precognition eye open, and without it, I had no way to see Ruijerd's movements.

"—Wah!"

Ruijerd closed in in an instant and I was thrown to the ground.

But opposed to ten years ago, I knew what to do.

Thanks to my regular training, I managed a last minute response.

Ruijerd came at me with his spear from the right, and I raised the right hand of the Magic Armor MK. II to guard.

But Ruijerd then came around with a low kick which I blocked, and then used that leg as a pivot and kicked around with his other leg to knock me down.

"How's that?"

Ruijerd thrust his spear at the back of my neck and looked down at me expressionlessly.

"I concede. Splendid skills."

I have no idea what's going on.

But I can't say anything else.

I don't think he'd stab my neck, but it's obviously my loss.

“Is this sufficient?”

What’s he talking about?

Is what sufficient?

“Isn’t it me that’s insufficient?”

“...Then, is this enough?”

I don’t know what’s enough but in this situation he’s not lacking anything.
No matter what I say it would still be uncouthly.

“This is enough.”

As I said that, Ruijerd, moved his spear out of the way.
I raised my body up and sat down.
And looked up at Ruijerd with with my pathetic face.

“Then as promised, I get your sister.”

And then Ruijerd said something odd.
He gets my sister?
What about my sister?

Was there that kind of promise?
Huh?
What were we talking about?
I seem to have lost sight of the conversation.

“It’s just as you suspected.”

What did I suspect?

“I have fallen in love with Norn.”
“Fallen in love...”

I desperately tried to remember the meaning of that phrase.
If I remember correctly... It’s a feeling. A feeling of longing for someone.

“...Huh?”

Which means that Ruijerd likes Norn?
No, wait, don’t jump ahead.
Misunderstanding are my weakness.

“So Ruijerd-san, you like Norn?”

“.....I like her.”

Am I being pranked?

Should I happily say, “Then I’ll let you marry Norn”.

And then when I go and bring Norn along in a white kimono, Ruijerd will come along with a giant billboard saying “Huge Success”.

That would be a huge mental shock. Norn might even kill herself.

It has to be Hitogami’s doing.

Damn it! For Ruijerd to be Hitogami’s apostle!

“Is this some kind of joke? Or maybe a punishment game?”

“It is not a joke.”

Ruijerd looked slightly offended by that.

That’s right, Ruijerd isn’t the type to joke around.

Especially at times like this.

“From when?”

“Several months ago, around the time of the battle in the Biheilil Kingdom. I would like to hold closely, the woman who so devotedly looked after me.”

They did look like they were getting along well together back then.

It couldn’t have just been Norn’s one sided feelings.

I thought I would be pushing Ruijerd into a marriage, but it seems like it wasn’t like that at all.

“Of course, I didn’t intend to make a move.”

Which means that if she wasn’t my sister, he would have made a move.

Normally he would have made a move.

According to Orsted, that’s how it went in the previous loops.

“But you had realised. Which is why you came around with that sudden conversation.”

“ ... ”

That’s not why.

All I knew was that Norn liked Ruijerd.

Whoever realised that it was mutual wasn’t me.

There's no way I'm that sharp.

I'm the thickheaded type.

My cutting ability is the same as that of a flail.

"I'll say it again. I would like to marry Norn Greyrat."

Ruijerd said that and pointed his spear at my neck.

"For that purpose, I have shown you my guts."

So that's what this is.

This is happening because I said that.

A duel to test courage.

But I don't even have the strength needed to witness the extent of Ruijerd's guts.

Well, there's no point in confirming something like that now.

But something like that.

Being more confused than you thought.

And things advancing too well.

Is this a trap?

Just who is trying to entrap who?

I don't get it.

What's going on?

"Umm... Are you alright with your previous wife or your son?"

I don't know and therefore continue questions.

I said that while sitting down and looking up at Ruijerd, and he answered.

"I told you before. I won't be dragged around by my past anymore."

I do remember him saying it was because there was no one there for him.

Ruijerd looked at me sitting and put down his spear and sat too.

I changed to seiza.

With that, our gazes were the same height.

"Meaning..."

Ruijerd said just that, and hung his head with a difficult face.

"..."

He kept silent.

Having me suddenly appear and exposing his feeling, awakening his resolution, and he brought me all the way out here.

But he was always bad with words.

And on top of that, he probably had a lot of things he wanted to say.

“ ... ”

I was in too much of a hurry.

Even with what Orsted had said, there was no need to immediately set these two up.

I should have used a more indirect plan to bring the two of them together.

Like having Norn kidnapped and Ruijerd rescuing her...

No, the only one who would be charmed by that would be Norn, Ruijerd might fall into a trap.

Wait, if I did that, Norn would hate me.

“I would eventually marry a human.”

While I was worrying away, Ruijerd said something.

When would eventually be?

“What do you mean by that?”

“Thanks to you, the Supard race is headed towards restoration.

The people of the Biheilil Kingdom and the Ogres have kindly accepted us.

Eventually, like the Ogre race, the countries Royalty and nobility would send someone to create a blood relation with.

And it seems I was deemed to be the most suitable match.”

“Hmm.”

So there was something like that going on...

Well there usually was.

Ruijerd's position was something like the assistant of the Chieftain.

But as a Hero of the previous war, he was looked up to.

The village idol... may be a little off but he's something like a guardian deity.

Ruijerd would end up marrying some Biheilil noblewoman.

The Supard race would enter a position of guardians of the Biheilil Kingdom and they would be able to rest easy.

“But if I had the choice... Rudeus, your family would be better.”

With those words, I felt warm from the bottom of my heart.
A good relationship with Biheilil Kingdom would be to their benefit.
I'm sure that it would be much more beneficial as opposed to being in my family.

But Ruijerd chose my family.

I was chosen!

No, not me.

Not good, I almost became GirIdeus.

But as I was thinking that, I realised something.

“Is Norn alright with you?”

“What do you mean by that?”

Ruijerd is suspicious.

“Norn is... How do I say it, quite selfish.

And without thinking about the conciseness, say some awful things.

If you for example had some kind of lovers quarrel, she may end up saying something insensitive about your past.”

“...”

Words that I didn't expect came out.

That was odd.

I'm supposed to be supporting Norn, I should be pointing out Norn's good parts.
But all that comes out are the bad points.

“It seems like she can do housework, but it can't be called her speciality.
She can study, but she can't put very much of it to practical use, she fails at most things the first time.

At Sharia she can cope with most things easily, but at the Supard village, there would be plenty of things she wouldn't be able to figure out.

I'm sure she would end up causing trouble for you.”

No, this isn't what I want to say.

In my house there's another young woman.

For example, Aisha.

Honestly, Aisha is far more excellent than Norn.
She can do housework and look after children.
She's better to the extent that there's nothing Norn can do that Aisha can't.
When I think about it like that, I can't help but think "Is Norn alright".

I want to root for Norn.
But I also like Ruijerd.
It's because I want these two to be happy that I try to think of how to make sure no one is dissatisfied.

"—But that's the result of her trying her very hardest."

What interrupts my words is Ruijerd.

"I know. Norn's bad points and her good points."

I lost my words and Ruijerd looked as if he was pressing me for answers.

"You know it too don't you?"

"Of course."

Norn has plenty of good things about her.
I'm not that well informed on Norn as of late.
But I know what kind of person she has become.
Having lost to Aisha, she became far more docile than necessary.
She became far less hysteric and began to get along with Aisha.

Taking care of someone is good.
It wasn't so much at home, but her classmates and juniors looked up to her.
At her 15th birthday, plenty of Norn's friends came.
Even now, some of her school's underclassmen still come over for help over studying or the student council comes to ask for advice.

Norn goes at everything with the utmost effort.
And as a result of trying her hardest at everything, although she can't be the best, she can at least somehow do the things she isn't good at.
Because Norn has plenty of things she isn't good at, she can't do things in an instant compared to others.
And so compared to Aisha, there's a world of difference.
But other people don't matter.

With her own effort, she steadily advances.

And I'm sure that, from here on out, she'll continue like that.

Norn is just that kind of girl.

A very good girl.

A little sister I can be proud of.

And Ruijerd also knew that.

He knew that Norn is someone that always tried her hardest.

There's no need for me to say it.

And even Norn's bad parts.

He had known for a long time, and accepted it.

Taking it all in and still holding feeling for her.

"...Whenever it may be, will you always protect Norn?"

"Yes."

Ruijerd gave a reassuring nod.

Right, if it's him, he'd protect Norn until he died.

"When you get married, and Norn is surrounded by a different race, separated from her family, and think she's in trouble, will you support her?"

"Yes."

Ruijerd gave a reassuring nod.

Right, if it's him, he'd support Norn until he died.

"If Norn is feeling down and says something bad, will you remind her of her courtesy?"

"Yes."

Ruijerd gave a reassuring nod.

Right, if it's him, he would comfort Norn and gently hold her.

"Norn is a Millis believer... Can you promise not to cheat?"

"Yes."

Ruijerd gave a reassuring nod.

Right, it's obvious. Ruijerd wouldn't lose himself to a woman's wiles.

"Norn is, she's a bigger crybaby than me, is that ok?"

“Yes. So don’t you start crying.”

I began crying my eyes out.

His words were short but his tone was resolute. His face was serious and his gaze, earnest.

“There’s no problem. I understand.”

I suddenly remembered.

During the journey across the central continent after the teleport incident.

I remained at ease by Ruijerd’s side.

No matter what kind of demonic creature, I could rest, assured that he would protect us.

Of course, he’s not that great at taking care of things other things than demons, but as a person, that can’t be helped.

Nobody’s perfect.

Norn can simply make up for the things Ruijerd can’t do.

And I’m sure Norn, as she is now, can do that.

She has already proven that.

If she couldn’t then Ruijerd wouldn’t have said that he desired her.

While thinking like that, my shoulder grew weak.

I was relieved.

“Please take care of my sister.”

Finally, I lowered my head.

—○●○—

Author’s Q&A

Q: It’s because of practice that she can cook well, but how did Rudi, after living in the same house for so many years, not try it?

A: If he had asked she would have made something for him, but all the practise was probably done somewhere else.

Like at school.

Q: I’m so happy that I feel that something’s going to go wrong...

A: Even though this is a redundancy chapter!?

Q: It's good to cry isn't it.

A: I don't mind it.

Q: I think this belongs on the daily rankings. But if the people that see Mushoku Tensei and then go read the original are only a few, I think it would be a waste.

A: The redundancy chapter is just an extra so it's ok.

Q: The light novel manga deal that I bought has arrived.

A: So it arrived!

That's good...

Q: A secret extra chapter... It's really great.

A: That this story became three chapters, it surprised me too...

Chapter 3: Norn's Marriage — Final Part

Part 1

— Norn's Perspective —

It has been decided that I will be marrying Ruijerd-san.

It was quite a sudden experience.

I answered earnestly to my brother's various enquiries, after which he pulled Ruijerd-san along with him in no less than 10 days. Ruijerd-san then confessed his love for me and asked my hand in marriage.

The talk moved forward as my mind was still in a daze, the marriage ceremony was to be carried out after 10 more days.

Brother and Ruijerd-san were steadily making progress.

My job was to create a marriage dress along with the Superd women. A very Superd like dress which looked similar to what Ruijerd-san always wore.

It seemed that the marriage would be carried out in Superd style. I wished that I would get to do it in Milis style, but stressing the fact that I would be the one going to Ruijerd-san's place as his bride, I wasn't reluctant. All the Superd people were good-natured as well, and I honestly didn't want anything more than this.

Ruijerd-san would probably not like being kissed on his forehead in public.

Brother told me that he would take care of it and I could only be grateful for that.

But, maybe, if I only wished for just the **Milis Necklace** then maybe... Should I ask for it... ?

I'm pretty sure this might be my last chance to request something selfish from my brother.

“ ... ”

I was currently in the middle of clearing out my room as I was pondering about such things.

The room that I have been living in almost everyday together with Aisha after being brought along by Ruijerd-san. Since I had been living in the dormitory for so long my attachment with the dorm room was stronger than this one. But I realized that various memories dwelled within this room as I was clearing things out one-by-one.

The doll of Ruijerd-san created by Zanoba-senpai. I was very moved the first time I saw it and ended up asking for it, after which I placed it in my dorm room. Even Nii-san did not say anything. Someway or another, gazing at this doll became my daily habit. It wasn't an exact replica of Ruijerd-san but it was still similar to him. I kept wishing that I could see him again, watching this doll everyday.

And then the wooden sword. The sword I received from Eris-neesan which I swung almost everyday because of the training I received from her. I hadn't really progressed that much, and I knew that I didn't have much talent for it, but it was fine.

Swinging a sword is quite fun and it wasn't like I wished to be the world's strongest. No one in Sharia said something ridiculous like 'You don't have talent so forget about it!'. Of course, that list also included Nii-san and even Eris-neesan, Sylphy-neesan and Roxy-neesan... not even Zanoba-senpai or Cliff-senpai said something like that. Even though each and everyone of them were extremely gifted, they didn't say anything.

I now know how wonderful a thing they did for me and I am grateful for that. And I also understand that even though I did not have any talent, giving your all and working hard is what really mattered. If not for that I would have never become the Student Council President.

In the Student Council where I became the President, none of them had any talent. To some teachers, and even during the first part of the year, we were known as the Stupid Student Council. But only Vice Principal Jinas said 'The students are getting along well, even better than during Ariel's Presidency'. Actually, it seemed that crimes and violence among students were few during my time as President...

It was possible that I just got lucky, but I think that it was *because* we didn't have any talent.

It was because we were dumb, we could be considerate of the students. Because we were dumb, the students could be considerate of us. They would think that they had no choice but to help us out.

If in a school of over 10,000 people, if they know that a student council of little more than 10 people are still giving their best, it's only natural that those 10,000 students would start to be more considerate.

I had also stopped wearing my school uniform, which now stay in the closet. If I recall, I heard from someone that Nanahoshi-san designed this uniform. Before that, students wore tattered clothing. But everybody was already wearing the uniforms or robes by the time I enrolled.

Everyone wore the same uniform, be it a student with a scary face or a bewitching woman.

I thought it was because everyone wore the same uniforms that I had so many friends. Were it not for the uniforms, I wouldn't have been able to make so many friends.

Just by looking at the Demon race or a Beast race, I couldn't even approach them as I would be too scared by their appearance.

Well something like that is beyond me, really.

But even Aisha mimicked us by adopting the uniform system in her Mercenary group, which led me to believe that putting on the same uniform on every student was a very effective move.

'Cause even that Aisha ended up doing it.

And finally, father's sword that was now hanging on the wall. The sword he used almost all the time before marrying mother. The sword given to me by Nii-san when he was distributing father's belongings. There was one more sword given to Aisha, but he quickly took it away saying that he had to use it in the war. Father's armor laid in mother's room.

I used to pray to this sword each time something happened. Father wasn't really a Milis believer and was someone who would scowl at the very mention of it, but I liked doing it anyway.

If he were still alive, he would surely scold me for this but I didn't think that he would hate it. Since even father tried his best at things. Because there are times when we fail even if we work hard which is true for me and even Nii-san... that's

why I liked doing it.

And thus today as well, I prayed to my father.

“I am going to get married now, father.”

No, it was more like a report than a prayer I guess.

Nii-san said this. It seemed that even he visited father's grave to report things. Even though he's such a busy person... He's very diligent.

“Nii-san has been diligently playing your role, father. Even though I think that I am a burden to him, he's still doing his best for my sake without raising any complaints whatsoever.

... I can't thank him enough for what he's done for me.”

I intended to report about my marriage but ended up giving my thanks to Nii-san. I thought of Nii-san as someone who protected me by filling in for father who died and mother who became that way. Of course, he's a very busy person so he couldn't keep his eye on me all the time which made me thought he looked after me unwillingly after father's death.

I now know that it wasn't like that.

I can't explain it more properly but Nii-san seriously tried his best to fill in for both father and mother.

I had a memory, a very old and distant one. It was a memory of right after I had been born. Of course it was vague and I didn't have a good grip on it. It was a time when I couldn't even reply in short words properly. It was a memory where... I had a contest with Aisha.

I didn't know why we were having a contest but I remember that mother was there at the goal line. And of course I was defeated by Aisha. Aisha reached mother with a terrific speed and then mother hugged Aisha and praised her. I cried after watching that. Mother was far from me and I thought that she was stolen away by Aisha, that I wouldn't be receiving any praise and so I cried. And then mother said “Norn, I'm waiting right here for you, so come to me.” She said that and waited for me until I finally managed to reach her and then she praised me.

Nii-san was also someone who waited for me. No matter how slow I was he still waited for me. He persevered, even at times when he was confused or

smiled wryly, he never once abandoned me and always waited for me. He's that kind of person. That's why I think that he seriously tried to fill in mother's shoes as well.

"..."

It's the same with the marriage preparations as well. Nii-san did all of it. I did think that if father was still alive then he would have done the same things as Nii-san.

He might've not liked Ruijerd-san though and would've gotten into a quarrel with him but if it came to marriage then he would've said "Leave it to me" and would've done the preparations in secret.

Since it seemed like the same thing happened during mother's marriage.

"..."

While thinking about such things I continued clearing out my room and in no time, I was finished. It was never a room that had much in it, but now that my personal belongings were no longer here it was completely empty. It seemed like this room would be used by Lucy-chan and other kids but it should be fine if it's cleared out this much.

Now all I had to do was to take my belongings and some keepsakes and go to Ruijerd-san's house. To Ruijerd-san's house in the Superd village.

Honestly, it felt like I was in a dream or something. Marrying that Ruijerd-san that I admired for so long since way back then. My heart was beating like crazy. It seemed it was the same for Sylphy-neesan, starting a married life with the person you love gives birth to expectations mixed with tension. Ruijerd-san was way older than me but after I married him then I would have to do what Nii-san and Sylphy-neesan and the others do. I knew how it's done but I didn't really put into practise. I'm a little nervous. I wonder if he'll be gentle. I wonder if I'll be able to do it properly.

But my mind tilted more towards the expectations rather than tension. I was really nervous. That day, the moment I heard Ruijerd-san's name I immediately asked Nii-san to go ahead with the marriage proposal, I was really glad about that. I thought that from the bottom of my heart.

"Hey, Norn-ane... do you have a moment?"

Suddenly, I heard the knocking on the door. There was only one person who would call me Norn-ane.

It was Aisha.

“Yeah, what’s the matter?”

“Umm... can I talk to you for a bit?”

Aisha entered the room with a somewhat fidgety look and closed the door behind her.

That was unusual. It’s possible that this might be the first time I saw Aisha acting like this towards me.

“How about we sit down there?”

“Okay.”

With a suggestive tone she sat on the bed. I put my luggage away which held my belongings which I was going to take to Ruijerd-san’s place, and sat on a chair.

“Uhh... Norn-ane, congratulations on your marriage... no, engagement?”

“Thank you.”

Now that I recalled, when Nii-san announced my marriage, I was then congratulated by various people but never by Aisha.

“It’s a somewhat strange feeling. That Norn-ane is getting married.”

“Did you come here to say only that?”

“No, not that... umm... Norn-ane, how does it feel to get married?”

Aisha wasn’t facing my way. She was averting her eyes away as if trying to ask something that shouldn’t be asked.

“How... meaning?”

“Why are you getting married, Norn-ane?”

... Ah, now I remember. Aisha had said something like that to me before. That “Even though you know you don’t have any talent, why would you still try?”

She was the same as usual little sister.

Still, those things sounded like sarcasm or insults back in the day but I’ve come to realise that those were quite the different things. Because Aisha is Aisha, she

has so much talent in so many things, she ends up getting puzzled in various ways. Because she ends up doing everything easily, she can't understand someone who tries to do something which they cannot do.

No... words spoken by Aisha back in the day were mixed with a considerable amount of sarcasm. That's why I really disliked her in those days.

But that dislike had already gotten away.

I wonder just when the sarcasm got out of Aisha... I am not sure right now but I do think that she changed a lot after Lucy-chan was born.

"Even if you ask me why... well for once this marriage has meaning to it, and I love Ruijerd-san as well."

"What's it like to love someone?"

"... A desire to live together or the desire to hug your lover or be hugged back, those kind of feelings gush up naturally."

"I love my Onii-chan but is that the wrong kind of love?"

"That's... I don't know because I'm not you."

"Right..."

After that Aisha stretched her legs out while sitting on the bed and fell on it with a thud.

"I really don't get it..."

While flapping her legs around, Aisha groaned in puzzlement.

"These days, both Pursena and Rinia talk about nothing but marriage, it's so annoying. They keep talking about how I'll miss my chance or how I can't compromise after having come this far. Is marriage such a desperate thing to do? Do I have to do it? Is there really a need to do it theoretically? But it isn't like everyone is thinking that far right?"

"Do you not want to marry, Aisha?"

"I don't know whether I want to or not."

"Don't you have any one you like?"

"Nope."

I decided on marrying Onii-chan when I was a child but even he seems to think differently of that idea, but then I can't even imagine leaving this house..."

Aisha was all over Nii-san ever since she was a small child. She was like that

since I met her for the first time in Millis, around the time when father recovered and began to work splendidly for a short while.

Honestly, no one really knew that Aisha was my sister. It was like if you asked someone from the hostel, they would go “Ah, so she’s from a previous marriage”. Even Lilya-san said to see her as a fellow maid rather than my sister.

I wonder just when I actually started to accept her as my own sister. Probably around the time when we started going to Milis school together or possibly when we travelled to Sharia with Ruijerd-san and Ginger-san.

I couldn’t recall it now but I did know that I had already acknowledged her as my sister when we started our new lifestyle in Sharia.

“Norn-ane, just how are you feeling right now?”

“I... feel blessed.”

“Blessed? What kind of feeling is that?”

“It’s hard to explain but, how do I put it, I feel like nothing could go wrong... I understand that it’s not going to be nothing but good times from here on out, but I feel like from here on out, I don’t have to doubt the good things anymore, something like that I guess.”

By the time I finished talking, Aisha had already sat up and was staring at me. And after a short pause, she said :

“That’s what you call being blessed?”

“Seems to me that sort of thing...”

“But I feel like that almost all the time?”

“Then, aren’t you always being blessed?”

As I said that, Aisha fell on the bed once again.

“Being blessed... I don’t think so. I’m kinda envious. I feel like I’ve lost to you for the first time.”

“I don’t really feel like I’ve won though...”

“Nah, I lost. I probably lost to you, Norn-ane.”

That was unexpected.

Never in my entire life, no matter what I did, was there a test where I won over Aisha.

And it wasn’t just Aisha.

Even in school I wasn't someone special. I only had a 45% winning chance in a mock magic battle and averaged out at 80 marks in all of my tests. Of course, being the top student was only a trifling matter.

If I studied and had a contest with Aisha who didn't study then I would definitely win once or twice but as the matches continued 10 or 20 times I would start to lose all of them. Aisha had a knack for knowing things, her growth was fast and she was good at gripping the essence.

That Aisha felt at loss...

Despite that I didn't feel all that happy. It's probably because I never really gave it my all because I never intended to compete with her. And it's definitely not like I'm marrying so that I can have an upper hand on Aisha.

"Listen, Norn-ane."

"What is it?"

"Can I come visit you once in a while after you get married?"

This was unexpected as well. It was probably because I had the impression that Aisha was keeping her distance from me for quite a while. She didn't show this kind of attitude when caring for Nii-san's kids but even while I was alone or had nothing to do she wouldn't approach me that much.

"Yeah... of course."

"When you have kids, let me hold them okay?"

"Okay."

Kids...

I've heard various things from Sylphy-neesan. Though I think that it's still too early for me, I've still resolved myself for when the time comes.

Well, I've resolved myself for whatever that comes before it anyway.

Aisha was taking care of Nii-san's kids even now. Even Sylphy-ane thanks her a lot for helping out. Now that I think about it if I left the house then I would have to raise them alone. I'm worried about that.

I wonder if I'd be able to do the job...

Sylphy-neesan would probably say "You'll be just fine, Norn-chan", Roxy-neesan would probably be as uneasy as me and Eris-neesan would just say "Raise them however you want".

I'm worried.

"If you would be so kind to teach me about child rearing, I'll be glad."

"Leave that to me!"

"Okay... fufufu."

I laughed. Aisha's smile made me somewhat happy and thus I laughed.

That day I chatted with Aisha till late night. Chats that didn't hold any meaning or just idle complaints with no conclusion carried on endlessly.

And then, the next day, I took my belongings and moved to Ruijerd-san's house.

Part 2

— Rudeus' Perspective —

Norn's and Ruijerd's marriage was to be performed in the Superd village in Superd style.

The villagers gathered with each of their own cooking under the full moon and congratulated the bride and groom while having a feast together.

I wasn't one of the villagers but I still participated by bringing along my cooking and my family as if it was natural. Since we were Norn's family, they obviously couldn't say no. No one denied us. Rather, they all welcomed us.

The cooking was prepared by Lilya and Aisha.

It seemed that Aisha held some complex feelings regarding Norn's marriage.

Ever since the marriage had been decided, she was seen quite often lying on the sofa rolling around, deep in thought and then getting scolded by Lilya.

Which reminded me that a few days before the marriage, the two of them were talking about something till late night in Norn's room. I didn't know what they were talking about... but even she might have some things to think upon.

Since it definitely wasn't like she wouldn't give her blessings to Norn.

Even the cooking that was brought for the wedding saw no signs of shoddiness, instead she put all of her skills into making it. She collected the ingredients from Milis and Asura and made a huge fruitcake.

We were worried whether or not the Superds would be delighted by something

sweet but then Roxy gave it her seal of approval. Well, it's possible that she just likes sweet things...

Since it was pretty much Norn's most precious moment, all of the family members attended. The small kids Ars and Sieg were here as well, and of course Leo, Jiro and Beat too. Not just the family, the perpetrator who made this marriage a reality, Orsted, too was here stealthily hidden into a corner. Added to that, we invited Norn's friends from Sharia as well, who were happy to attend. The Student Council and Norn's underclassmen, after hearing about Norn's marriage, requested with their heads bowed that they be allowed to attend as well.

In the open place of the Superd village, the humans who were attending the marriage while shivering in fear was a pitiable sight to see the least but... Well, after seeing the happy and blessed Norn their tension gradually wore off and they had enough composure to pour sake to Norn when the banquet was reaching its climax.

Yep, Norn looked happy.

At home, or rather in front of me, Norn looked sullen almost all the time but now that she was sitting beside Ruijerd, her face was floating with a bashful smile the whole time.

Moreover, each time Norn tried to look at Ruijerd and Ruijerd who sensed it tried to look back, she quickly looked downwards as her face got red like a tomato.

Her body was dressed in the traditional bridal costume made by the Superd females, in front of plenty of cookery, her face grew red and a smile floated each time she saw Ruijerd.

Also, it was good that we prepared a Milis style wedding to include in the middle of the actual ceremony as a surprise. We pretended that a change of clothing was necessary and dressed up Ruijerd and Norn in snow white clothing. By the time they returned, Cliff who had hidden himself as a surprise guest, started reading the Milis ritual prayer.

In the end, when the necklace prepared beforehand was put on Norn by Ruijerd, Norn's face went full red as Ruijerd went down on his knees only for Norn to kiss his forehead clumsily.

Norn had a surprised face the whole time but by the time it ended she was smiling in tears. That smile seemed to be incredibly happy.
If this is not a blessing then I don't know what is.

"Norn-ane looks so beautiful."

Aisha called that Norn beautiful. Was it her attire that she considered beautiful or was it her happiness, I did not know, but Aisha was looking enviously at Norn.

"Your time will come too, Aisha."

"I won't be doing this."

An immediate reply. Aisha did not wish to be married. For me, I would like to send Aisha away in the same fashion as Norn but...

Well, marriage isn't life so I wouldn't mind even if she didn't want to.

"..."

Nevertheless Norn was a bride now huh. I'm deeply moved.
When we met in Milis she was so small and aggressive. After enrolling in school, she even confined herself in her dorm room. A troublesome child, a hopelessly clumsy child, I had such impression of her and yet before I knew she entered the Student Council, became a fine President and worked diligently, was idolized by many of her underclassmen and was now married.

"...Kiiin."

Reflexively, the inside of my nose became prickly and made a sharp noise.¹
Dear Paul-sama.

Norn is incredibly beautiful, she has been raised into a good girl.

Can you break out from your gravestone?

No, there's no way you'd be able to.

If not then please come as quickly as possible.

"Onii-chan, don't cry at a time like this."

"I'm not crying. *sobs*"

"Right... if you can watch her from afar then why not at least say a few words to her?"

"Nh, nh~"

The banquet was in full swing so the attendees were giving their blessings to the bride and groom in order. Though there wasn't this kind of custom in Superd style... Cliff might've said something.

Norn was receiving their blessings with a smile. She was having such a happy time. Would it be fine if I approached her in such a time like this? I felt like it would be fine just watching her from afar.

"Would Norn be displeased about it?"

"She won't."

"Really?"

"Really."

"... Won't you come with me?"

"Why not go along with everyone?"

Well, it's not like I'm worried about that. I'm worried how I'm going to react. I'd absolutely end up crying. I would end up crying in Norn's precious moment. I'd end up making crying sounds ungracefully. Everyone would point at Norn's big brother as the one who cried at her wedding, a crybaby.

No, that's fine but just the other day I was being told by Ruijerd not to cry so I didn't want to cry here of all places. I wanted to at least cry in Sylphy's lap when I reached home.

"Got it. Then let's go."

But I must go. With everyone in tow, I approached Norn.

"Ah."

When Norn saw us approaching she tightly closed her lips for an instant but immediately turned it to a smile, she might have something to say.

I wonder what, I'm scared. As I was thinking, Sylphy overtook me as I got cold feet and was the first to stand in front of Norn.

"Norn-chan, congratulations on your marriage."

"Thank you very much. Sylphy-neesan."

"There will be times when uneasiness or tension happens between the two of you but most of it will be manageable so talk it through with Ruijerd-san properly and give it your best."

"Yes. I'll try my best."

Sylphy said that and gave a smile in return, then stepped aside. The next to come was Eris.

“Norn, congratulations.”

“Yes, thank you very much. Eris-neesan.”

“Don’t forget to do your daily sword practice okay? Ruijerd is strong but it’ll come handy when you have to guard yourself.”

“Yes, I’ll make sure to carve it in my heart.”

Eris nodded in satisfaction and then stepped aside. And then moved to Ruijerd’s side and started talking about something. “I won’t forgive you if you can’t protect Norn.” or so she’s saying. After Eris, Roxy came out in front.

“Norn-san, my deepest and most sincere congratulations.”

“Thank you very much, Roxy-sensei.”

“Stop calling me sensei now... no, make it the last time so allow me the privilege of imparting you with some knowledge. People would say this and that about marriage between different races but there’s no need to give it any heed. If you act ordinarily everyday then people would come to admit it before long.”

“... yes, sensei!”

After that Lilya and Zenith were now in front.

“Miss Norn, my most sincere congratulations.”

“Lilya-san, mother... thank you very much.”

“I think that I wasn’t a pleasant existence for you, Miss Norn. Aisha made you sad on numerous occasion but all the responsibility lies with me and I am to be blamed for...”

“No, there’s nothing like that. Lilya-san, you were my mother as well. Aisha too, is my sister. There were certainly some bad things but I never really thought of it as your fault but rather something that was ordinary.”

“...If you say something like that then, gusu... uuu...”

Lilya was keeping quiet but ended up crying anyway. Really, Lilya just keeps on crying these days. Zenith was gently brushing her back, but after a short while Zenith casually moved to Norn’s side.

“Mother?”

“...”

Zenith smiled ever so slightly and took Norn's hand. With both hands, as if to cover up something precious, she tenderly clutched them.

"M-mo-mother..."

Zenith did not say anything. But it was transmitted. The feelings were transmitted to Norn and tears started spilling out in volume from both of Norn's eyes. I quickly understood that she was trying her best to not cry before.

"Mother, th-thank you... very much... uuu... for everything you've... done until now."

No longer could Norn make out proper sentences. By the time it was my turn Norn's face was already all sloppy because of tears and dripping nose. Even though it was her precious moment, her marriage...

"Nii-san."

I took out a handkerchief from my pocket at once and held it against Norn's nose.

"Alright, go ahead and blow now."

"I can do it myself!"

Norn snatched the handkerchief from me and blowed her nose in it. After that, confused about what to do with the now dirty handkerchief, I took it from her and put it in my pocket. And then once again I faced her.

"Uhh... Norn... congratulations."

"Nii-san..."

With her lips tightly sealed she looked up at me. I wonder what should I say. I had prepared to say something but I've completely forgotten all of it now.

"Nii-san, umm. Thank you very much for up till now. I'm now happy. But I think that it was all because of you that I'm this happy right now."

Norn said as I was hesitating. She said that she was now happy. I could tell it from seeing.

"No... it's because you worked hard, Norn."

"I didn't work hard. Even this marriage, you did all the work for it."

“If you hadn’t work hard then you wouldn’t have said that you wanted to marry Ruijerd.”

Ruijerd is a soldier person or a child person.
If Norn had stayed the same child she used to be, then this would have ended in complete failure.

“But I think that it’s because of you, Nii-san. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart.”

When Norn started to sob again, I took out the handkerchief from my pocket, but when I realised that handkerchief was all wet I was quickly presented with a different handkerchief from my side. It was Aisha.
I took that handkerchief and wiped Norn’s tears.

“Norn.”

“Yes.”

“Umm, I can’t say it properly and most of the important things have already been said by others so I don’t have anything else left to say to you but...”

“Yes.”

“There will be hard times or painful times in the future but... keep working hard and umm, stay happy forever.”

Strangely enough, tears did not flow. I thought that I would definitely cry and I was moved to tears not too long ago but by the time I finished talking my tears had already withdrawn. I stood in front of Norn with only a proud feeling.

“...Yes!”

And then, Norn stopped crying as well, with a huge smile on her face she nodded in agreement.

Part 3

And thus, Norn was now married.
Ruijerd and Norn were a couple with a huge difference in their height and age but their compatibility was perfect, as such a child was born in just a year.
A child with a face exactly like Norn’s, green hair and a cute tail, having a gem on her forehead, a female Superd.

That girl was named 『Luicelia Superdia』.

When Orsted heard that name, he made an absurdly scary face. With an absurdly scary face, he smiled.

Looking at that smile, which gave me goosebumps, I realized. I realized that it was the name that was in agreement with his memories.



Author’s Q&A

Q. This is redundant!?

Wouldn’t it be alright to include it in the main volume?

A. I had originally planned for Gisu to be gathering companions during the Cliff Chapter, and to write the Redundancy Chapter during the Organization Chapter, and then for Gisu to betray them at the end of the Redundancy chapter...

It was that kind of flow that I had planned.

But time flowed a bit faster than I had hoped and Gisu betrayed them at the end of the Clif Chapter and we ended up with what we have now.

Q. Is the Redundancy chapter in chronological order.

A. It’s currently undecided.

It’s possible that the order may be mixed up.

Q. One question: How did they bring Beet along?

I’m pretty sure he was planted outside the door...

A. Of course he was transferred into a plant pot.

Translator Notes and References

1. Some kind of superstition maybe.

Pie : The Author also said that he would probably get 1–3 more stories out before the end of the month.

He also implied that he would be writing the story of 80 years at some point.

Kaezar : He also said that Luicelia was the first to come out from the 3 characters named Norn, Ruijerd and Luicelia, she was the last survivor of the Superd race. She’s a very reserved person, honest and would immediately kill her enemy but she was someone who battled on in difficult circumstances,

tried very hard and earnest on surface, a beautiful Demon.

She won't be making any appearances except in her child form in this volume but if the author wrote the 80 years from now story then she would probably come out.

Kaezar : May as well add more things. Author had given out a list that he will be including in Redundancy volume, the list includes :

List of things he will write :

- Norn's story → We've already got this.
- Aisha's story → We'll probably get this next, maybe Aisha's marriage(it's not written Aisha's marriage story just Aisha's story)
- Zenith & Lilya's story
- Kid's story → He's thinking about writing a different story as a spin-off for 1 or 2 kids
- Family vacation → Showing the grandkids to Claire-obaasan in the Holy Kingdom of Milis, swimming in a lake, going to a hot springs in Blue Dragon Mountain range with Talhand as guide.
- Izolte's marriage hunting story
- President's everyday life → Along with Lil' Elf-chan and Alek
- Nanahoshi having a meal
- Going to the Holy Land of Swords once again
- Magic Tournament in the Magic University
- Zanoba's automaton completion story
- Luke & Ariel's afterwards

List of things he's undecided about :

- Dungeon capture by Rudi and 3 wives + α
- Julie's parents story
- Adventuring in the Heaven Continent
- Vera & Sierra after story

Different from Redundancy volume, things that will get their own title in time :

- Shinohara Akito and Kuroki Seiji story
- The mischievous young life of Perugius-sama(Laplace war story)
- Legend of Kishirika and Badigadi(The second Human-Demon War)
- Oldeus' story(Oldeus = Old + Rudeus = Future Rudeus)
- The mystery behind the relationship between Dragon race and Hitogami
- Tale of the Black Wolf's fang
- The legend of how Lara and Leo comes to be the saviour
- What happened to Nanahoshi in the end
- Norn-chan's heart-warming school days

All of this is merely provisional and subject to change.

Pie: That sounds pretty siq.

Papa and Lucy

Chapter 4: Lucy's First Day at School — First Part

Part 1

Some time passed.

Eris and Roxy safely gave birth to their children. Both of them were girls. Roxy's daughter was named Lily and Eris's daughter was named Christina. With this, we now had 4 daughters and 2 sons.

Our house had become a little cramped. It was about time we gave some thought to remodelling while taking family planning into consideration.

Furthermore, Lucy was now 7 years old.

Now that she was 7, she could be called a first-year student studying in a primary school. The primary school was a place where kids of the same age learned about the fundamental knowledge that was essential for survival while co-habiting with other students.

Of course, it would be beneficial if that knowledge was taught by the parents themselves.

The most important keyword in a school was communal life.

Humans are beings who lived in groups. Most humans can't live alone. They are beings who live together while helping each other, loving each other and getting into fights from time to time. It's possible that those with the will to stay alone are out there, but they are probably a minority.

A school is a place where one learns how to make colleagues or friends, how to interact with them and how fights occur.

Nevertheless, a primary-school-like system didn't exist in this Ranoa Kingdom. It should be obvious because there was no compulsory education. Here, a school was considered to be a place where people go if they wanted to go.

Even so, I thought that there was a need to go to school. Part of the reason was that I dropped out of high school in my previous life, but as for this life, I

did learn a lot of things in the school of this world too.

I got along with Zanoba, met with Cliff, Badigadi, Nanahoshi, Ariel... And then married Sylphy.

There was no doubt that it was because of my daily attendance to Ranoa Magic University that my human relations were now in such abundance.

As such, I thought that there was a need to go to school, to let them go.

As such, during last year's family council, that proposal was approved by more than half the members. Sylphy, Roxy and Lilya were in agreement. Even though Eris said "There's not really any need to go", she didn't strongly oppose it.

Thus, it was decided that our children would start attending the University when they became 7. Though the other students enrolling wouldn't necessarily be in the same age group, it was decided with the thought that it would be beneficial to their future.

And today was Lucy's first day attending school. From here on out, for 7 years, or possibly even more if she repeated a year or two, this was the very first day of her school which she would be attending for a very long time.

"Is there anything that you've forgotten, Lucy?"

"Nope!"

Lucy, wearing her oversized uniform and carrying a bag too big for her, was now standing in front of the entranceway. Everything that she had on was brand new. The beginner's staff and the robe contained within the bag, magic textbooks, even the lunch box, everything was new. And it seemed that Lucy, with all her new things, was happily grinning while looking at herself in the mirror.

As a result of that, she was somewhat careless, even to my words. Well, she did check those out many times over yesterday night, and there weren't that many belongings to begin with. So I guess it should be fine.

But, that, isn't she forgetting that? Then shouldn't it be fine to remind her?

"Do you have your handkerchief?"

"It's in my pocket!"

"Pencil case?"

"It's in my bag!"

“Lunch box?”

“It’s in my bag!”

“My goodbye kiss?”

“That’s a no!”

That’s a no!?

Impossible, that can’t be...

Nevermind.

Um... was there something else? Something which was easily forgotten. Like future dreams, aspirations, the truth...

“Rudy, it’s gonna be fine.”

As I pondered, Sylphy came and patted on my back.

“Lucy is already a grown up, so it’s fine.”

Grown up.

She had certainly grown up. She was already 7 years old. Now that she was 7 she could do various things and do it alone.

“Papa, it’s gonna be fine! I’m gonna work hard!”

Lucy said while clenching her fist. That gesture was brave, lovely and very worrying. If I was a kidnapper and looked at something like this, I would immediately steal her away.

Although she had grown up, she still had some way to go.

“Lucy, don’t follow any strangers no matter what they say, okay?”

“Okay!”

“If they forcefully try to take you away then shout out my name as loud as you can, okay?”

“Okay!”

“If they covered up your mouth and said that they’ll kill you if you make a noise then ask them to read the letter I’ve prepared, okay?”

“Okaaay!”

Incidentally, I’ve written quite a bit for the kidnapper. I’ve written just whose subordinate I am and what kind of people I have connections with. I’ve also written just what would happen if Lucy were to be hurt. It’s possible that they

might not be literate, but I've made necessary arrangements with the slave traders and asked them to socially lynch those who seem like they would kidnap my children. Those who would kidnap my children would be ostracised.

Still, cause for concern was something that was common. Unpredictable situations could exist in any amount. I couldn't help but get worried sick that Lucy might get dragged into something like that.

"Lucy, if your friends at school bully you then tell it to your teacher."

"Okay."

"I don't think it'll happen, but if even the teacher bullies you, then tell it to Blue-Mama or Vice principal. Both of them stay in the staff room."

"Okay."

"If you think that you can't tell to Blue-Mama or Vice principal then there's White-Mama or Red-Mama or Auntie Aisha or Granny Lilya or Granny Elinalize... anyway, just consult someone. Of course, Papa is fine as well and Papa's friends too. Don't try to do things alone, okay?"

"Okaaaay."

"If you are being bullied by some other kid then..."

I was suddenly grabbed at the nape of my neck and was pulled backwards. When I examined the situation, I saw Sylphy with an anger on her face. Lucy seemed to have become a little downhearted as well.

"Papa, I'll be fine, okay...?"

Lucy said with a little uneasiness in her voice, her eyes upturned. I wonder if I ended up making her nervous. I should've told her more about a dream-like school life. For example, to try her best to make 100 friends in school.

But it's a serious matter. Though at times it would seem like there would be no one to help you from bullying, your ally would be lying in wait, somewhere around you.

"Rudy, try to believe in Lucy a little bit more."

".....Okay."

But yeah, that's right.

We're sending the kid to school to raise her level of independence. I shouldn't

be thinking about dealing with every single little thing. In time, even Lucy would grow up and then leave our house to become fully independent. Of course, I'm talking about way into the future, but we were sending her to school so that she could do that properly in the first place.

That's right, this matter was decided by the whole family.

"Lucy, say that you're off."

"I'm off!"

Lucy said that and opened the door, she left the house cheerfully. Seeing that, I said "Take care" while carefully watching over her.

"..."

The ones who saw her off were me and Sylphy, Eris with Leo, Zenith and Lilya. Roxy had already left for school. It seemed that some trouble came up at the Mercenary group, and as such, Aisha left just as early. The rest of the kids were still sleeping as they were still small.

"I'm going for my sword practise."

"Well then, allow me to do the laundry."

"Then, I'll do the cleaning."

While everyone left in small groups, I just kept staring at the door. The same as Leo. I'm sure our hearts are on the same wavelength.

I'm worried.

Perhaps Lucy had already gotten lost on her way. Though she walked the road to school along with Sylphy and Roxy quite often. But she's alone today. I was worried.

As I thought, perhaps I shouldn't let a 7 year old child walk alone. Such a cute little child should not be allowed to walk the roads alone. I should make a muscular bodyguard follow her. For example, someone with green hair, holding a white spear, who loves children.

After that, comes teaching.

Lucy had been given special lessons by Eris, Roxy and Sylphy. It's not that she won't be able to keep up, but that we might have taught her so much that it would cause her to feel out of place.

It's not like she's a raw diamond either. Though Vice Principal Jinas did say something like that, we still enrolled her as a normal student keeping in mind that a normal experience would be best for her. She even sat a proper examination.

I did not know whether that would result into a good direction or a bad direction. I also had fears that she might be used as a guinea pig.

"Leo."

"Woof."

Leo replied to me with but a single word, and raised his head to stop me in my tracks. As expected of our guardian deity. We both were dancing to the same rhythm. We didn't even need to exchange any words between us.

"Rudy! Don't you dare!"

As I put my hand on the door, I heard Sylphy's sharp voice coming from the back. On looking back, I saw an irritated Sylphy standing there with her hands on her waist.

"Didn't you promise just yesterday that you wouldn't do anything and just watch over!?"

"No, you're misunderstanding. Leo wants to go for walk."

As I said that, Leo turned on his tail, walked towards the hallway, and escaped to the children's room.

This was treachery. He would protect the kids from outer enemies but wouldn't protect me from my wife.

"Listen, Rudy."

As I was petrified on the spot, Sylphy gave out a sigh without removing her hands from her waist.

"I've told you before, but I think that I was able to grow up because I was separated from you, Rudy. You taught me magic, you taught me how to study, and making that as my basis, I learned a lot. Even after you were gone, even when I went to Ariel-sama after the Teleport Incident."

"Yeah."

"It's true, teaching someone all kinds of things and protecting them is good. But

only having things given to you by someone else is not. People have to find themselves and know what they can and can't do. If someone is always supporting you, when the time comes to walk on your own, you won't be able to."

I was looking forward to this day. As Lucy's guardian, I would go to school together with her, ask the teacher to take care of my kid, and intended to show her around the school. For that reason alone, I took a holiday today. I requested Orsted to give me a day off.

But, Sylphy insisted yesterday just like right now. That I mustn't be allowed to go along with her. That Lucy should be sent to school alone. She insisted upon that.

"That's why, okay? Just quietly keep on the look out for now? Even if she made a mistake it'll only be for Lucy's own sake."

".....Okay."

I consented as well.

Sylphy had been raising Lucy for 7 years. She of all people sent Lucy out with such confidence, that's why I must respect that too. It's bad if I just keep on dealing with things for her.

Well, it's so worrying because I understand that. Lucy was a reliable kid. She was good at taking care of her little brothers and sisters, she was obedient, and I had heard that the neighboring kids yearned for her as well. In fact, she might just get used to school life even faster than someone like me.

Then there was only one thing that I could do. I prayed so that Lucy had a fun time in school. My God resided in that school so my prayer should definitely get through.

"...Then, I'll be going to meet Orsted-sama."

"Yeah. Got it. If there's something you need then tell me."

...But I still feel lonely. While thinking that I headed towards Orsted's office.

Part 2

All of that happened about 1 hour ago.

“And now I’m here.”

“...”

“I mean, I know that Sylphy is right. Even I— even Sylphy was able to grow because we left our house. That’s unmistakably right.”

I was expressing my idle complaints. I had consented. If that’s what Sylphy had decided then I had to abide by that too. Luckily, there were many acquaintances in the Magic University and danger was low as well. I had also heard that student order had improved quite a bit because of Norn’s Presidency. The mercenary group led by Aisha had become quite big due to which the whole town’s order had improved as well. Yet, I was still worried. I had this indescribable fuzzy feeling.

“But... you know.

Lucy is still 7 years old. She’s so small yet has to go to school alone... that’s just... Well, I mean it’s true that I went to Eris’s place when I was 7 and started exploring around my village from age 5 but... But I could at least see her off, right?

Orsted-sama, what do you think?”

“...”

Orsted had a grim face. A face which questioned whether this matter was related to work or not.

I might’ve mistaken him as someone to consult with. When given considerable thought I realised that he was still my boss. Not a person who should be listening to my idle complaints.

If the idle talk was related to Hitogami then it might be fine but I guess lodging complaints about my family matters was not a good idea. Even Orsted might not know how to answer if he was suddenly asked about something like this. And Lucy was someone who was not within Orsted’s field of knowledge...

I just thought that Orsted might understand somehow.
This unbearable feeling of mine!

“...”

As I was lost in thought, Orsted stood up. He could also be seen perking up his

shoulders.

Of course, I'd expect this as I've associated myself with Orsted for a long time. I knew that he wouldn't get angry at something like this.

He was not angry at all. It took a considerable amount of effort to anger him.

"You are foolish."

Huh? He got angry?

He's not angry, right? He looks angry. That's weird. I'm being scolded.

"...Use this."

The thing Orsted handed over to me was the black helmet. The spare curse reduction helmet.

"..."

What am I supposed to do with this?

"You're not worried about your daughter, you just want to go and see her, don't you?"

"!"

I see, that's right!

I just want to go and see her. It's not that I'm worried about Lucy or not or anything. No, obviously, that's one reason as well, but I just want to see her introducing herself in the classroom, quickly raising her hand trying to answer a question, tip-toeing in the library to get a book, and things like that.

There was no parent's day in Magic University. I wanted to go and see Norn as well but couldn't. I wanted to watch Lucy at least.

That wish of mine was very big!

"B-but, if I go and see her then Sylphy would get angry."

"..."

When I said that, Orsted silently took off his coat. And then, put it on my shoulder. As if to say "Use this too". Just what am I supposed to do with the helmet and this coat?

"Umm... this is?"

"It's fine as long as you don't go."

Orsted-sama, I do not know what you are trying to say.
Please explain it in a way that the foolish me can understand. Even though I want to go, I shouldn't? Please spare me that quick wit of yours.

“.....Hm?”

No wait, does that mean...
Rudeus himself mustn't cross that bridge which means that it's fine if he doesn't.

One's clothing determines one's position. So if the clothing changes so does the position. And if the position changes then the person changes too.
I had the position of Orsted's right hand man while I wore the grey robe. But what would happen when I wore the white coat and black helmet?

“ ...”

I put on the helmet and wore the coat. The helmet was heavy and the coat was bulky but warm. If I wore it for a long duration of time, my shoulders would probably get stiff. But that was only a trivial matter. I stood in front of the mirror.

“This is... me...”¹

The one being reflected in the mirror was undoubtedly... The Dragon God Orsted! That's right, if I wore the black helmet and white coat then even I could become Dragon God Orsted! If I were to go and was scolded then it's fine if Orsted goes!

Everything turned out better than expected!

“ ...”

...No, it's different no matter how you look at it.
I did not look like Orsted at all. My height was different and so was my breadth. My entire ambience was completely wrong to begin with. There's wasn't any strange and powerful atmosphere like the one that comes from Orsted. The being reflected in the mirror looked like a impersonator no matter how you looked at it. To the trained eye, this appearance would be found out as a sham at just one look.

“Umm... won't they find out like this?”

“They wouldn’t be able to know that it’s you.”

Well that’s true. Yeah, that’s just how it was. It didn’t have to be Orsted, it didn’t even have to be me. Which meant that I should just put on the helmet and be done with it. As expected of Orsted, he’s an amazingly bright gentleman.

“Orsted-sama.”

“...”

“Thank you very much.”

“Hmm.”

Orsted reseated himself in the chair with a tired expression. There’s probably some documents that need filling out. I might’ve interrupted him during his work. Since I wasn’t supposed to be here today.

“Well then, I’m off.”

I went out of the conference room with an appearance similar to Orsted’s. As I couldn’t bear it any longer, I hurried to Magic University.

Part 3

I left the office in Dragon God style.

It was a mighty fine weather outside. Fine weather appropriate for Lucy’s first day at school. And I somehow felt stronger, probably because I was wearing these clothes.

Is this how a person feels who swaggers about under borrowed authority? I feel like I could make even the North God dance around my pinky.

“Orsted-sama, are you about to leave?”

“...!”

As I was thinking that, I was suddenly called out from the back of the office. When I looked around, I could see a young boy holding a large sword.

Aleksander Ryback. It was North God Kalman the Third. Don’t tell me, did he hear my thoughts? Nah, that’s not it. I feel like he’s cleaned himself up a bit, but it’s kind of like, only at the level of feeling stronger after watching Rocky.

That so-called 'movie motivation.'

"Where might you be heading today, Orsted-sama? Shall I accompany you?"
"...?"

For a moment I thought he was mocking me.
However, Alek's eyes were clear in all respects and his tone was sincere.

"Ah, thank you very much for the other day. To think that the North God Style four foot form would have such an advantage...
I never thought that you would be so knowledgeable about the North God style. It's clear to me just how inexperienced I currently am. Now that I recall myself during the Battle of Biheiril, I might die from embarrassment."

Don't tell me he hasn't yet realised that I'm not Orsted? No, that can't be. Alek had been at Orsted's side constantly these days. He even lived in one of the basement rooms of the office. He had taken the role like that of a watchdog of Orsted. It would be troublesome if the watchdog mistook his master for someone else.

"Have you not realised yet?"
"What have I not realised!?"

No, when it came to the North God style, he might be deceiving me. It's the Death God's bewitching sword, the technique to make your opponent bewildered.

"Please say honestly, you already know, right?"

When I said that, Alek wore a puzzled face immediately after which it became a serious one, and then he put his hand on his chin. Furthermore, he tilted his head sideways and furrowed his brows. It was as if a question mark was floating around his head. This was truly a face of a person who hadn't yet realised it. It would be quite a feat if this was an acting.

"Please forgive my insolence. It seems I'm a bit dull as such I cannot understand."

"...Really? Can't you feel that something might be out of place?"

"Might it be the trivialities? Please forgive me but I'm someone who doesn't pay much attention to minor details as such I might not be able to evade any

traps or such and I'm aware that is not a good thing, but I've been like this since birth so..."

He began giving an explanation. Did he really not realise? My height was different, even my physique, and I wasn't really trying to imitate Orsted's voice or anything, my tone was different from his to begin with. Even though the curse had been reduced, you could still feel discomfort to some degree... Is this a joke? Eh? Really?

"The correct answer lies in the conference room of the office."
"I see, got it!"

Alek said that and entered the office with a triumphant look. I thought of him as a sharp guy during the Battle of Biheiril but I wonder how he really was. It could be that his mind works differently during peaceful times. Yeah that's right, even my concentration changes during battle. That may be it. But I've gotten a little worried that someone like him is left alongside Orsted...

Part 4

When Aleksander entered the office, his eyes met with the receptionist named Faria Steer. While looking at Aleksander and pondering whether she should ask or not, she finally opened her lips after a moment of hesitation.

"Excuse me, Aleksander-sama."
"What is it, Faria-san? I'll be going to find out this *correct* answer that lies in the conference room so please make it short."
"Rudeus-sama had just now left the premises wearing Orsted-sama's clothing but... does he intend to do something?"

Upon hearing that, Aleksander made a very surprised face.

"Eh... Rudeus-sama wearing Orsted-sama's clothes... !?"

Aleksander couldn't even think about doing something like that. Imitating Orsted's clothing style was something which was absolutely dreadful to him.

And at the same time, he gulped down his own saliva. The reason why Rudeus was wearing Orsted's clothes didn't even require him to think that much. He thought that something needed to be done which could only work with

Orsted's clothes.

Possibly a decoy or something. He thought that Rudeus intended to lure the enemy out while in disguise as Orsted and arrest the enemy. In the meantime, Orsted would be able to achieve an objective.

Which meant that the enemy was so strong that one couldn't fight the said enemy without Orsted. For example, one of the overlooked World Powers, Technique God or someone who Aleksander had unpleasant memories with, Death God Randolph. Or one of the Demon Slaying Three Heroes, Armored Dragon King Perugius Dola or possibly North God Kalman the Second, Alek's father, Alex.

Either way, Rudeus had enough potential alone. It was possible that victory could be assured if he were to equip the Magic Armor but then he wouldn't be able to accomplish his job as a decoy.

Even Aleksander knew about Rudeus' bravery. The fearless Rudeus. Aleksander knew that Rudeus' combat power was inferior to his. However, those movements he saw in Biheiril Kingdom still remained in his memory vividly. That power to face an enemy far stronger than yourself with simple honesty. That was something Aleksander knew well. It was courage. Rudeus was a hero who had been acknowledged by Atoferatofe herself.

And then, he realised, that this was the *correct* answer.

"Faria-san, please keep that matter confidential."

"Y-yes..."

Faria Steer's neck inclination was gradually coming up to its regular position but Alek paid it no heed and put his hand on the door to the conference room.

He prayed that he would be granted the honor by Orsted to fight alongside that hero someday. While burying those feelings deep within his heart he entered the room.

Though it was only a few minutes after that Alek would ask about the correct answer from Orsted himself.

Translator Notes and References

1. “Kore ga... Atashi...” Rudy is saying ‘atashi’ here, an extremely feminine way to refer to one’s self. It’s a common line for a girl who’s just gotten a makeover.

Chapter 5: Lucy's First Day at School — Last Part

Part 1

I chose a route and started walking, a route with the least people possible. And yet, I felt like I was attracting attention. It was probably because I was currently in disguise.

Something called one's imagination.

But even so, others did not have much interest. No, I still felt the surroundings gazes.

But that should be obvious. Orsted had been using the office on the outskirts of town for a while now. There weren't many people who had seen him in person, but there were plenty who knew of this appearance of his. A black helmet and a white cloak.

Right now, my outfit was the same as that of Orsted's trademark. Walking through the town like this, it was natural I attracted attention.

In fact, without the curse, I might be giving a favourable impression to the townsfolk. Maybe I should try the main street. Doing good things to give someone a better image, like in the old days.

The main street was closer to the school too.

"Yep, that's good."

Killing two birds with one stone.

Improving Orsted's reputation would be a plus for me as well.

Right, next time I should propose a『Dragon God Festival』where everybody dresses up in black helmets and white cloaks and dances in ecstasy.

With that in mind, I started moving towards the main street.

"Wha!?"

And, in that instant, I quickly turned around and hid myself.

I had glimpsed a familiar red haired person in the main street. And with that red haired person was the figure of a large white dog. And on the dog's back

were two children.

They were Eris and Leo. And on Leo's back, Lara and Ars.

Leo, you two-timer! Even though you ran away from a walk with me, you went out with Eris.

No, it was different for me. That was a farce of a walk for my own satisfaction. What Eris and Leo were doing was territorial scouting.

But what do I do now?

I never thought I'd encounter Eris now and here of all places. No, I could probably talk my way past Eris. Like saying we could go visit Lucy together.

"..."

But how would I go about explaining this outfit. She wouldn't immediately try and stab me right? I'm also worried about the kids. Right now, I was doing something I obviously shouldn't. I broke my promise with Sylphy. Should my children be allowed to see this pathetic side of their father?

The answer is no.

.....

Now that I gave it more thought, it really wouldn't be a good idea. I even went to the trouble of a disguise. I should just go back home. I made it this far through a lapse in judgement, but wouldn't waiting at home with Sylphy and greeting Lucy when she comes back be the better option?

.....

But I wanted to see Lucy in her hour of triumph. I know it's selfish but it's different from what Sylphy said. I definitely wasn't doing this because I didn't trust Lucy. And it's not so I could help her out from behind the scenes. I promise. I swear to God.

Even if she looked as if she was about to cry, I wouldn't lend a hand. At home, I'd properly hear the story from her and only then would I help her out and instruct her.

Nice one Rudeus buddy. That's the line. That's the line that wouldn't break my promise with Sylphy. Though I had decided on things on my own, without consulting with Sylphy first, but as long as I kept that promise, I wouldn't really be going back on her words. But still, after all of this is over, I'll properly tell her

and apologise.

It was actually because I wanted to see Lucy in class that I went to look. I'm sorry, I can't hold myself back. Is that alright? Can I do it? Can she get angry if I am honest?

Alright. Good boy, Rudeus.

"Woof! Woof!"

Ah, in any case, it seemed that Leo had noticed me. His nose was twitching and he was looking in my direction.

"What is it?"

Eris noticed too. It's not like it's a problem if I'm found, but explaining this getup would take a while. Getting held up would also be a pain. Let's take a detour.

"Whoever's hiding there! Come out!"

But it was already too late, I was already found out by Eris. These clothes stood out too much...

Now then, what to do. Do I go out or not? If I do, how do I explain it?

No. But... Yes. There's still quite a distance between us. She shouldn't be able to clearly see me yet.

"..."

I showed myself from the waist up. Eris had her hand on her sword and Leo was wagging his tail. And on top of that, Lara, on top of Leo, and Ars sitting as if hugging her, were also looking at me.

The two of them were looking at me blankly, their gazes pure.

"Orsted...?"

Eris looked confused and removed her hand from her sword while I turned around. Nonchalantly.

With movements as if to say that I just coincidentally came across you on the roadside, nothing to worry about.

"...Wait just a minute."

"Tch...!"

Eris called me to a halt. Was my cover blown? Eris was a Sword King. A warrior who went almost toe to toe with the former Sword God. Looking at my demeanour, you could tell in an instant that I'm not Orsted.

"No, I'm just imagining things. It's fine. Let's go, Leo.

But as soon as I stopped, she said that, turned around and started walking. Leo was glancing in my direction but he didn't chase after me and followed Eris. The plan was a success.

"..."

My eyes suddenly met with Lara's and Ars' on top of Leo. The dazed Lara and the puzzled Ars. They watched me from Leo's back. As if they were sending me off, I left that place.

Part 2

I arrived at the school. I avoided the front gate, climbed the wall and breached the compound. And then aimed for the classrooms.

I may not have participated in many classes, but I did seriously attend the school for many years. I did know where the first year classrooms were. I avoided students getting taught in the schoolyard and those walking during the intervals, heading for the first year classrooms.

This place hadn't changed much either. It hadn't even been a decade since I graduated, but it really felt like that. Though the number of unfamiliar students had increased.

It also felt like there had been an increase in Elves, and Beast and Dwarf races since my time as a student. There also seemed to be a large number of Demon races.

I heard from Roxy in the dining room that the main members of the student council were from the Elven race, and the next chief of the Dwarf race, so that seemed to be reason.

It was something that couldn't be seen when Ariel was president.

The amount of other races had increased, but the fact that they were not arrogant anymore was most likely due to the remains of Norn's presidency.

Basically she simply did not permit any type of racial discrimination. And that was what caused the current atmosphere of the school.

A small portion of the nobility of the Magic Triumvirate apparently did not approve, but they are like that, proud by nature.

I was walking down the hallway pondering about such things, when suddenly, while I was turning a corner:

“Uff.”

“Ah.”

Almost immediately, someone came from around the corner as well. That person was being followed by five students. No, rather than being followed it was more like being surrounded. When I said being surrounded, it gave off a bad feeling, but it was basically a popular student walking to class with other people. I could see some of the surrounding students holding notebooks, it seemed that there was something they didn't understand and were asking about it.

It's a very admirable thing to do. Yep, that's right, that person would be able to answer anything. And what came out from that person's mouth would undoubtedly be the truth.

Well, sometimes that person might be wrong, but that mistake also includes the truth.

Those who ask will receive revelation. Liberation.

Let those words resound within you – grasp their meaning, and any may attain strength. Oh students who earnestly accept those words – ponder their meaning and think about how you must live. Oh students, right now, all of you are in bliss.

“...Orsted?”

That person, with suspiciousness lurking beneath those slightly sleepy eyes, looked up at me. Several seconds later, those eyes opened up wide.

“No, Rudy? It's Rudy, isn't it. It's Rudy, right?”

As expected of Roxy. That keen insight of her's wasn't something I could fool.

“...How did you know?”

But I asked nonetheless, because the foolish I couldn't help but seek the truth. Though it was clear to me that it was the wisdom of Roxy. I asked whether she had reached the truth without any real reason.

"It's obvious, the only person with the courage to wear that (Imitate Orsted), would have to be Rudy."

There was a reason. As expected of Roxy!

"Is Orsted-sama aware of this situation?"

"Yes, this was a suggestion from him after all."

"I see... Then that means that there's some reason for it."

Roxy nodded her head and began scrutinising my outfit. I felt like she had some kind of convenient misunderstanding.

"..."

But is that alright? Should I deceive Roxy? Should I lie to Roxy for a momentary period of selfishness? Is that fine? Rudeus, is that fine with you?

"No, there's no important meaning to it."

There's no way that's fine. I cannot lie to Roxy. Lying to Roxy has a different implication than lying to Sylphy or Eris. The thought that lying to Roxy in an important situation is something is wrong, that can't be helped. If I lie here, the next instant, I will come flying in from 20 years in the future and hit myself with a Stone Cannon. Or this very second, I, having lost my identity will suddenly have my limbs melt and turn into an indeterminate existence.

"Then why are you wearing that?"

"Well... I wanted to see Lucy..."

"...Wanted to see? What about your promise with Sylphy?"

"I'm not secretly helping her out or being over protective.

It's just that, I just— I just wanted to see what she was like in class..."

While I flusteredly said that, Roxy silently looked at me, with reproachful eyes. The surrounding students too were perplexed at such a sudden development.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

“...I understand.”

But, Roxy relaxed her gaze.

“As long as you honestly watch over her without lending a hand, I’ll pretend I didn’t see you.

I just saw that Orsted had simply come to the school to inspect it.”

“Sensei...!”

“Just this once.”

“Of course. When I get home, I’m going to apologise to Sylphy too.”

“That’s for the best.”

I’m pardoned. I am no longer any match for her. From now on, I will bow three times in Roxy’s direction, five times a day.

“Well then, I have to teach these children until the next class begins... By the way, do you know where Lucy’s classroom is?”

“Yes. Of course.”

“Well then.”

Roxy said that, gripped my hand once tightly and continued down the hallway. The students saying “Who was that just now!?” followed after her. She’s quite popular. It’s only natural. She’s my teacher after all.

“Alright.”

After I had once again fired myself up, I set off down the hallway.

Part 3

I arrived at the classroom. I was peeking into the classroom from the hall, but then I thought that looking from the hall wasn’t a very good idea and circled around. If a rumour that Orsted was peeking begins to circulate, our company’s reputation would be affected.

While pondering such things, I made a partitioning screen near the window of classroom. Near a window which was not visible from the surroundings...

“...Wait? Couldn’t I have just claimed that I was doing a classroom inspection?”

Roxy said I could after all. I felt like I could have gone and gotten permission to watch. If I had explained it to Jinas, he probably would have done something like that.

I messed up.

Well I guess it's fine. As long as I can see Lucy, I'll be satisfied. While thinking that, I activated my clairvoyance and looked inside.

Several desks were lined up in the classroom. Students fit to be called first years were sitting in rows. Most were over 15 year old adults. There were some 10 year old kids too but there was basically nobody as young as 7. There were some kids that looked about 7 but they were mostly from the Dwarf race.

Normal humans, Demon race, Elf race, Dwarfs and Beast races. Peaceful people, arrogant people, kind people, there were plenty of them. Sitting in the back of the classroom was someone who looked like an adventurer, giving off an eerie vibe. Wouldn't getting involved with him get you bullied? No, no matter who they are, they wouldn't pick on a 7 year old child.

But where's Lucy... Aah, there she is, in the front row. As expected of my daughter. Sitting right in the front row full of motivation.

Is what I thought, but it seems her desk was too big. Her desk was so big it's hard to see the front. She's seriously listening to the teacher's words and taking notes, but because of the size of the desk she looks like she's having a hard time. After she gets home, it might be good to let her carry a cushion or something to sit on.

Sitting next to her was a girl of about 10. Most likely a Dwarf. No, from the feeling she gave off, she seemed human. From the way her hair was arranged, most likely a noble. She occasionally talked to Lucy while looking at her own magic textbook. She probably didn't think that taking notes was the norm.

Lucy looked at the girl's magic textbook with a serious face and said something while pointing. Because she was whispering, I couldn't really hear her, but she seemed to be teaching her something.

She seems to have already made a friend of a similar age. Have they become friends?

It's still only the first day of class and the teacher didn't seem to have any

intention of teaching anything too significant. Looking at the blackboard I could see that they're starting from the basics of the basics. Lucy had already learnt this stuff years ago.

An easy victory.

"Sensei!"

Is what I thought, when Lucy raised her hand.

"Yes?"

"Aggregate magic power isn't decided the moment you're born, it increases when magic is used during childhood. I think what you just said is wrong!"

Compared to what's taught in schools, what Sylphy and Roxy taught her was slightly different. But I feel like it might have been better if she had left it unsaid. Having their own failings pointed out isn't something teachers like very much.

"What's your name?"

"It's Lucy. Lucy Greyrat."

"Greyrat... Which meant you're Roxy-sensei's Daughter?"

"Yes!"

"Right, you must have received a special education since you were young."

The eye's of the teacher shone.

This teacher, I don't want to imagine it, but he isn't about to disrespect Roxy is he?

He wouldn't disrespect a parent in front of their daughter would he?

I had decided that I would hold back today, I had decided that, but starting tomorrow, your way to home might become a danger zone, you know?

"It's true that that theory is one explanation. It's true that may have been the case for your father and mother. It could also have been the case for your father's apprentice, Juliet-dono. But whether or not it's reliable has yet to be confirmed. Your father, mother and Juliet-dono may have been special cases. Or it may not apply to Magic and Beast races. It may just be that your father and Roxy are mistaken. There has not been any significant investigation. I will not engage in such research. Therefore, I will teach "Aggregate magic power remains the same throughout one's life." Because that is what I believe."

The teacher spoke in a torrent of words. In order to persuade Lucy, or maybe to persuade himself. Lucy listened to that with a serious face.

“Students, I’d like to hear it from you too. From here on out, you students will study a variety of things. In magic and otherwise. In school and perhaps after graduation, you will study. While you are at this school, we, the pioneers of the art of magic, will teach you all kinds of things. You, as students, may believe in those teaching or not, it is your choice. When things have been proven as wrong, we will admit our mistakes. And if you do prove a mistake in our teachings, it will be you who is teaching us. And if it is what you are saying that is truly correct, we will consent.”

Hmmmmmm. A way of thinking with high flexibility. It didn’t seem like he was a bad teacher.

In fact, he seemed like a good teacher.

“That is all. Lucy, do you have any further questions?”

“None! Thank you very much!”

“Good. Please be seated. I will continue with the class.”

The teacher gave a hearty laugh and Lucy sat down. And the applause burst out from the class. Lucy looked backwards surprised, her face became red and she looked down.

It’s alright Lucy. You just said something correct. Putting aside whether you’re truly correct, those who think you are are giving you applause. So raise your head.

And as I thought that, the girl hesitantly reached out and pet her head and said something.

To which Lucy looked up and gave a big smile.

Hmm, hmm.

Please get along with my daughter. It’s ok to fight, just get along with her.

Part 4

After that, I continued to watch Lucy’s classes for a while. There were some good and bad teachers. But Lucy didn’t hesitate and continued to berate the

teachers with questions and doubts. The teachers answered, avoided the questions and occasionally pointed out her mistakes and class continued like that.

Lucy stood out. A seven year old girl wilfully motivated to take class was quite rare. During break, while Lucy was eating her lunch, she was surrounded by quite a crowd, and by evening Lucy was already quite popular.

They were surrounding Lucy and asking her all kinds of questions. About her parents, her family, where she lived and about herself. She was without a doubt popular.

Some among them were probably just trying to butter up to my daughter. But that's fine. You can only meet a person once, the starting point may have been self interest, but there are all kinds of ends.

Life is long so it's better to let her seldom associate with bad children.

"Haa."

The last class ended. I was satisfied. I was able to learn Lucy's daily life at school. Of course, I wasn't worried. She was Sylphy's daughter and had been properly taught by her, Eris and Roxy.

There were no worrying factors.

No, well, if I did have a worry, it would be that she was my daughter. Spending everyday in the corner of the classroom with her head down on her desk, was a possibility. No, realistically, that wouldn't have happened. From here on out, there'll probably be plenty of painful things but it'll probably be fine.

After this she'll go to school every day and I'll be content with hearing her stories during dinner each day. While remembering what I saw today I'll be able to eat rice smiling.

I guess I'll go home now. For now, I'll return the cloak and helmet to Orsted. While thinking that, I removed the mud wall made partitioning screen by rescinding the magic.

"...Ah."

Standing on the other side of the mud wall was a single woman. White hair

and a slender body. Pants that looked easy to move in and a sleeveless top. The white arm extending from her shoulder, her hands placed on her hip and a face with a mix of anger and disappointment.

It was Sylphy.

“Ahem... Do you need something?”

I tried my best to mimic Orsted.

“Rudy, what are you doing here?”

Of course, it was futile.

“No, um... Sylphiette-san, what are you doing here?”

“Lara said that she saw her father hiding his face in a weird outfit while she was out for a walk.”

“Aah... Indeed.”

It was Leo. He betrayed me. He didn't see me, he confirmed it with his nose. Or maybe because Orsted's scent was mixed in, rather than Leo, Lara noticed. Leo and Lara can understand each other after all. No wonder Lara was looking my way.

“...Going as far as to wear that.”

Sylphy's shoulders were shaking. She was very angry.

Sylphy gets crazy when she's angry. I can't say specifically how. I can't say it, but whenever she gets angry or is sullen, I'm generally the one in the complete wrong and I'm pierced by reproachful eyes by everyone in the family. Everything becomes very hard. And for at least a week, I'll be spending the night alone.

“Can you really not trust Lucy and I that much.”

Tears started flowing from Sylphy's eyes.

Gloomy. This is a gloomy person. A gloomy person, not an angry one. For now, I kneeled in front of her right then and there.

“No, that's not it, it's not like that. I just wanted to watch Lucy in all her glory. I wanted to see her in class, asking the teachers questions. I wanted to watch her diligently studying.

You know, cause I haven't really been here very much while she was growing up."

During my flustered explanation, Sylphy looked at me with her tear-stained face.

"Really?"

"It is. It's just, I couldn't hold back any more, I had intended to tell you after it was over."

"...That's a lie isn't it?"

"It's true. I had intended to apologise to you."

"You wanted to see Lucy in class that much?"

"Yes."

I said that and Sylphy put her hand out and helped me up. She had already stopped crying.

"Then I'm in the wrong here, because even though you only thought about just watching and went so far, I forbade you to even look."

"No, you did nothing wrong. I had agreed to it beforehand after all."

"Yeah... You did."

As we were talking and such, Sylphy's gaze suddenly raised up. The look on her face said she messed up. When I turned around, I understood the reason.

"Aah..."

Before we noticed, the students were already looking at us through the classroom window. And with them, was obviously, Lucy.

Lucy looked at the both of us with a somewhat sullen face.

Part 5

"Um, today, I made friends with a girl called Belinda-chan."

In the end Sylphy, Lucy and I ended up making up and going home together. Holding Lucy's hands, the three of us were lined up. I thought she would get mad that I came but she wasn't.

One by one, she explained all the fun things that happened today in school.

“You know, Belinda-chan is the daughter of a minister of the Ranoa Kingdom. She’s still little, but she’s really smart, so that’s why she came to school. She says she’s going to become the best in the school and make her father notice her.”

“Really? That’s amazing.”

“And guess what, the first class was with Blue-Mama. At first, everyone made fun of her and I almost got mad, but then Blue-Mama, she showed us a little bit of magic and everybody was like “wow”. And then Blue-Mama said, “Well, it’s up to you whether or not you listen to my class.” She was so cool!”

“Why don’t you tell that story to Blue-Mama. I’m sure she’ll be happy.”

The plan was thrown out of whack but that in itself was a good thing. Holding Lucy’s hand, walking along with Sylphy. Walking along in a line, blocking the path probably isn’t a good thing, but what does it matter. This was my city.

“Did you have fun at school Lucy?”

“Yeah!”

Lucy nodded with extreme happiness. When I saw that I thought that there was nothing to worry about.

“See, Papa. Lucy was fine right?”

As if reading my mind, Lucy said that.

“Yeah, you were just fine. Good girl.”

“As expected of Papa’s daughter right?”

“Ahaha, way more amazing than Papa.

Lucy was outstanding. No matter how you look at her, she’s outstanding. Compared to her father who’s not alright at all. A guardian was necessary.

“By the way Rudy.”

Suddenly, Sylphy raised a finger.

“Hm?”

“How long are you going to keep wearing that?”

I looked down at myself. A thick white coat and a black helmet. Up until now I’ve been Fake-Orsted.

“I’ll return it tomorrow.”

Yeah, right. It won’t be a problem tomorrow. I didn’t say I’d have it back by the end of the day, and Orsted isn’t in any rush. But still, this cloak, the fabric sure was nice. It felt similar to a Red Dragon’s pelt, if I asked Aisha, would she know?

“By the way, Lucy.”

While I was thinking that, a question came from my mouth. It was a small question, for the sake of confirming something.

“What is it Papa?”

“It’s a problem. What’s the colour of my hair?”

This questions definitely wasn’t because I didn’t trust her. It’s just to make sure.

“Brown!”

“Correct. Lucy’s smart. I can expect good things from you in the future. As expected of my daughter.”

“Geeze~ Don’t make fun of me~”

As I was laughing at the sullen Lucy, I happily walked down the path.

“But Rudy, you broke your promise, so I’ll have you bear with it for three days.”

“Okay.”

I’ll have to bear with it for a little while, but I’m happy.

Part 6

The next day.

An odd rumour began circulating around the town. Orsted was aiming for Lucy. It’s probably because I was walking around dressed like that.

Rumor lasts for only 75 days. I obviously knew that it’s groundless, and since Sylphy and the rest of my family knew that too, it was fine.

While thinking that, when I went to Orsted to return the coat, Orsted was

glaring at me with a scary face, and I had to come up with an explanation...
But that's a different story.

Orsted's Coat: The material is the pelt of an ancient White Dragon. It carries an absurd amount of magic power, and possesses high physical and magical defence. It possesses self-restoration against ageing and damage. Because the Ancient White Dragon is now extinct, it's a unique Item



Chapter 6: Lucy's Family

– Lucy's Perspective –

My name is Lucy Greyrat. I'm the first-born daughter of the Greyrat House.

I have a big family. I have three Mamas, three small sisters, three small brothers, two Grannys, two Aunts and three pets. There are 16 people in total. It's a big family.

Let's start with my Mama. I have three mamas. They are white-haired mama, blue-haired mama and red-haired mama.

White-haired mama is the one who gave birth to me, and the first to become Papa's wife. Papa said that mama is the youngest and the most spoiled. White-haired mama is a talkative person and she always said this :

"It's important to make friends, okay? And you must never bully the weak, okay?"

She kept persuading me that it's important to make friends.

Blue-haired mama is Lara's mama, and the second wife of my Papa. Papa said that she looks small but she's the oldest, and he relies on her the most. Blue-haired mama is quite a reserved person, but she did say that :

"Live however you want, if you don't understand something then just ask someone."

She never persuaded me about anything, but she knew everything and always answered anything I asked of her.

Red-haired mama is Arus' mother, and the third wife of Papa. Papa said that she looks the oldest but she's actually very immature. Red-haired mama never spoke much but she did say that :

"It's important to protect someone. For that reason you must become strong."

Red-haired mama said that and disciplined me as such.

I think that I have to follow the teachings of my three mamas. I have to make friends, and in order to protect said friends, I have to become stronger. But I

must never bully the weak. And if I'm troubled about something then I should ask Blue mama about it. If I do, there won't be any troubles, and I'll be praised as well. Papa too, will praise me saying "You're so smart, Lucy. As expected of the elder sister."

I have 6 siblings in total.

The oldest after me is my younger sister, Lara. She's a very kind kid. Her hair is similar in color to that of Blue mama and her long hair stays in one single braid. She's quite strange too, and is often seen talking with Blond-haired granny and our pet, Beat. Though both Beat and Granny don't talk at all, she's the only one doing the talking.

Since she's like that, staying absentminded most of the time, when she goes out to play, she gets bullied by neighbourhood kids as they try to pull on her braid. Though I immediately go out to help her, she isn't really bothered about it to begin with so it's kind of a let-down. She likes her naps and tends to get on Leo's back to sleep there in peace.

After that is my younger brother, Arus. He's a brave boy. His hair is similar in color to that of Red mama, though it's short, cut and evened up. He's precocious and a naughty kid but he tries to protect me and Lara all the same. I'm sure that he's trying to do the same thing as me, trying to follow her mama's teachings. Red mama expects a lot from him, as such he's been running and practise-swinging the sword almost everyday. He's close with Aunt Aisha and always looks delightful whenever he's near her.

Then comes the youngest brother in my family, Sieg. In simple words, he's a crybaby. He totters behind Arus and starts crying if he's left behind too much. At that time, I scold Arus. In doing so, Arus takes Sieg's hand and the two of them get up on Leo's back.

When Sieg tries to climb on Leo, Lara moves back a bit and let's him take the forward. And then, hugs Sieg tightly from behind so that he doesn't fall off and ends up falling asleep peacefully.

Actually, I know one trait of Sieg that no one knows yet, he's actually very strong. He can pick up really heavy boxes with much ease.

I do have one more younger brother, namely Clive. He's the same age as Arus, though he's not my real brother. He's the child of White-haired mama's

granny's. According to mama, he's someone like a cousin to me or so it seems. I don't know why he's called as such but I deal with him as my younger brother anyway. He seems to have a good relationship with Arus, whenever he drops by for a visit he talks with him the most. It seems he likes me quite a bit, he clings to me a lot and whenever I pat his head, he smiles shyly.

My youngest sisters have just been born so I don't know much about them as they are still very small. But I'm sure they will turn out as good girls in the future.

I'm the older sister of all these little brothers and sisters of mine. Since I'm the oldest so I must act properly, or so I've heard a countless times from my mamas. I think that I'm doing just as I'm told. My little sisters and brothers are all cute too, so I do want to protect them.

I also have two Grannies.

The Blond-haired granny is Papa's mother. Her name is Zenith-san. She was a really lovely person once but now she can't talk, even having a conversation with her yields no reply from her. She always looks absentminded and is seen together with Beat in the garden a lot. However, when I feel sorry or get angry, she caress my head for some reason. She's a very mysterious granny.

The Brown-haired granny is Aunt Aisha's mother. Her name is Lilya-san. It seems that she was brought along to serve Grandpa's house as a maid at first, but acts just like how a maid would upto this day. The three mamas are very grateful and tip their hats off to this granny, but for some reason, in the past I wasn't sure just why she was my granny. Once, when I was walking in town, I heard someone saying "A maid is someone from the lower classes, someone to push around for work.". And when I tried saying that back at home, Red-haired mama got really angry and I got scolded. She slapped my butt until it got completely red and told me to reflect upon what I said by throwing me out the house for the night. When I was shivering, huddled together with Leo, Brown-haired granny was the one who let me inside the house. At that time, granny told me what actually happened. And then, I learned on that day that even though she's a maid, she's still my granny and she shouldn't be pushed around to work.

I also have two Aunts.

Both of them are still quite young, and when I call them aunts they get angry, but an aunt is an aunt. Although to me, they are like elder sisters.

The older aunt is the daughter of the Blond-haired granny, and the younger sister of Papa. Her name is Norn-san. She's a person who always works hard, plays with me a lot, and told me a lot of things. I like this aunt the most. I wish to become someone like her in the future. Though she got married not long ago and has already left the house. She rarely visits and even when she does, she gets into argument with the younger aunt. It looks like they are on bad terms but they can be seen laughing while quarreling often, and there are also times when they look like they are having fun.

The younger aunt is the daughter of Brown-haired granny, and Papa's half younger sister. Her name is Aisha-san. Similar to Brown-haired granny, she always wears maid clothings and manages most of the housework. Whenever I need help with something in this house, she's the one who helps me most of the time. She has basically taught me cooking, laundry and anything that's house related. Mama said that aunt Aisha can pretty much do anything and she's very good at what she does. It seems she also helps out with Papa's work. And yet, she gets scolded by Brown-haired granny from time to time. It's a mystery.

We have three pets.

The big white dog, Leo, is a Sacred Beast. He is very smart and understands what we say to him. It feels like he's watching over us all, Papa said to rely on him if anything bad ever happens. His favourite is Lara, and sticks to her most of the time inside the house.

Armadillo Jiro is Blue-mama's vehicle. He has a timid personality, when scolded he immediately shows his stomach or rolls up into a ball. But if something happens when we're leaving, he growls to intimidate anyone. He too, in his own way, tries to protect us.

Treant Beat is the watchful protector of aunt Aisha's vegetable garden. Since it is a plant monster, I really don't know what he's thinking but he's often seen together with Blond-haired granny and Lara. He's ruthless towards anyone who

may lay waste to the crops in garden. It's not a rare sight that we get to see it catch small birds which try to eat the seeds of Papa's favourite Rice, those birds in the end become it's nutrients. It's a little scary, but it never attacks family members. On the contrary, when we approach it, it let's us have a fruit. It is too, a family.

16 people. I have a lot of members in my family. I have lots of mama, and younger brother and younger sisters.

But Papa is alone. He's the only one alone.

I love Papa a lot. It seems like I tended to avoid him since I was a small child. Papa's odour gives me a peace of mind. Sometimes his beard scrapes me a bit, but I like that too. Papa doesn't let me touch his beard much. When it gets a bit muzzy, and I try to touch it, he grabs my hand and says "Sorry, I'll just go and shave it now." and leaves for the bathroom. Though I think it's fine, but Papa may think something otherwise. It's a pity that he doesn't let me touch his beard much, but I don't dislike that part of him at all.

But, it's just that... I think Papa doesn't really expect much from me. I sort of think that way. He cares for me, even loves me a lot, but I think that he doesn't expect much from me.

Surely, it's because Papa is an amazing person. Yep, that's right. I don't know much but I can somehow understand that Papa is an amazing person. When Papa was as old as me, he could already use Saint Class magic, and far from attending school, he was already at a position where he could teach. When he was 5, he went around playing in town or park, greeted everyone that he met, but all of those people know about Papa and respect him quite a bit. Even the most conceited ones end up praising my Papa. I know that my Mamas are amazing as well, but I knew since childhood that Papa is a special case. That Papa of mine, not expecting much from me... no, from us is understandable, I think it can't be helped.

But I want Papa to praise me. I will abide by what my mamas has taught me, and I'll protect my siblings as well. In doing so, I will receive a lot of praise from my mamas. But I want Papa to praise me too.

I'm already 7 years old. I'll be attending school from today onwards. A school

where adults attend as well, the school where Papa, Blue-mama and White-mama attended. Red-mama never attended this school, but I've heard that she teaches Swordplay from time to time.

"If it's you, it's going to be fine. You'll be just fine if you properly follow what we have taught you" or so Blue-mama had told me but I'm still a bit nervous. A place where adults are in majority. I'm worried whether I'll be able to make friends there, whether I'll be able to do my best. I have some hopes as well but my anxiety is greater.

But I think if I worked hard there, I will be praised by my Papa. "Lucy is amazing. As expected of my daughter." or so I think I'll be praised like that. And then, surely my hopes will be reached as well.

That is why, I'll work hard in order to achieve that goal.

The Story of The Seven Knights of Asura

Chapter 7: Isolte's Marriage Hunting — First part

Part 1

A long, long time ago.

In the days before the school of the Water God Style.

A certain country was frightened of the Water Dragon King.

Their fishermen had encroached on his territory, and incurred his wrath.

As a result, each day, their fishing boats were attacked, and water dragons frequently appeared in the port town.

The knight order attempted to resist, but due to the dragons' massive size and their ability to move freely through the water the country was rapidly pushed towards ruin.

They were on the precipice of destruction.

In this situation, the gloomy King declared that he would offer both his crown and daughter's hand to any who could subdue the Water Dragon King.

The many knights, brave men, and Heroes who took up the challenge met their end torn to pieces at the hands of the Water Dragon King.

What appeared then was a man carrying a single worn out sword, clad in worn out rags.

Dramatizations of this ancient tale depicted him as a splendidly handsome man, but this couldn't have been farther from the truth. His true visage could elicit only one word. Vagrant.

His name was Raydel.

Raydel volunteered before the king saying,

"I will defeat him. Everything will be ok."

With this, the King consented to his challenge.

Many thought he would give up halfway, as there was no way such a sloppy man could do anything.

But Raydel was strong.

He froze over the surface of the ocean, putting a stop to the water dragons' movements. Within a blink of an eye, he approached the Water Dragon King. Having broken out of the ice, the writhing Water Dragon King rushed to attack Raydel.

With his worn out sword Raydel returned the Water Dragon King's unblockable strike slicing its head off with a single slash.

With the Water Dragon King's head in hand, he returned to the country a Hero... Or so, he should have.

The king gave him a fortune great enough to play around with for the rest of his life.

That was all.

He could not consent to giving his daughter and crown to this dirty man.

Raydel was not mad but he fell into a deep depression.

He was in love with the princess.

He loved the princess whom he had always watched from afar.

Because his wish to marry the princess was not granted, he thought of leaving the country.

Or should he have decided so, he could have easily become the king through sheer force.

But there was someone who got angry in Raydel's stead.

It was the princess.

While reprimanding the King the princess hit him, sent him flying, and left the castle. She chased after Raydel who was leaving the country and clung to his legs , saying:

"I have abandoned my country.

I am no longer a princess, nor do I have a last name.

Even if you obtain me, you won't be able to have the country, you won't be able to become king.

But if that is still agreeable with you, please take me as your wife."

Raydel held the princess in his arms and left the country smiling. The two married soon after, then vanished.

Decades later.
Somewhere in the world, the Water God Style was born.

And in accordance with that story a custom was born. “The spouse of the Water God shall abandon their household”

Part 2

Isolte Cruel.
She is the person in charge of the Asura Kingdom’s Water God style school, and the single instructor of the Asuran Knight Order.
She is currently a Water Emperor, but just recently acquired the third out of the five secret techniques belonging to the Water God style.
In a few months she will succeed the name of Water God.

Age unknown.
Appearing in her twenties.
Stunning blue-black hair and dignified features.
Whoever saw her would admit she was beautiful.
But rumour has it that she isn’t really all that young.
In the Asura Kingdom, the only person that knows her true age is Lady Ariel.

But now, this woman is currently searching for a marriage partner.
Her long days of training to become the Water God are over.
Although she’ll still continue training, this is a turning point in her life, that is to say... She should seriously start considering marriage.

But her search for a husband is a difficult one.
Of course, that’s not to say there’s no one willing.
She’ll soon be the Water God after all.
There are many who have approached her.

Such as fellow Water God style disciples.
Captivated by her beautiful appearance, there are few men whose hearts have not been touched by her sincere training.
That being said, they are swordsmen.
They are those who have decided to make a living through the sword.

There are few men tolerant enough to take on a wife stronger than themselves. It was Isolte's condition that if they were a swordsman, then they would have to be as strong as her, or at least possess strength of the King class.

For Asuran nobles, female swordsmen have always been popular. The passive women of the Water God style have a much softer and more graceful demeanour when compared to those of the assertive and violent Sword God style.

Isolte would also be well versed in the etiquette of the imperial court.

A young, pretty, well-spoken girl; the men would be all over her.

And on top of that, she's an established swordsman.

To have a woman like that serve as their wife and to be able to dishevel her in bed at night.

Many Asuran nobles approached her with those thoughts in mind.

Of course, those who approached her with perverted hobbies and vulgar laughs were refused.

But every now and then someone who would make her think "This person might be alright." comes along.

Good looking, good personality and fairly good sword skills.

Those kinds of good looking men are quite good at hiding their perverted interests while flashing a smile and drawing closer.

Very prince like.

Isolte could easily see through guys like that.

The people around would always end up saying things like "He's actually a scumbag, don't bother with him."

Those prince types have good outer relations.

If Isolte cared about such superficiality, she'd have already fallen.

Thinking thoughts like "Well, he'll do."

Even so, those very princes immediately turned her down upon hearing her condition.

"I will soon become the Water God and will name myself, Water God Reida Ria.

If you are to marry me, you must abandon your household.

The spouse of the Water God must not have a last name."

The custom of the Water God.

Not following it wouldn't be disadvantageous and following the custom most likely would not provide any benefit.

It is simply a tradition followed by generations of Water Gods.

Isolte's grandmother, previous Water God Reida also followed this tradition.

Because of this, Isolte's father also didn't possess a last name.

Cruel was the last name of her mother.

And so, Isolte, who greatly respected her grandmother, wished to follow in kind.

But unfortunately, the princes that attempted to fool Isolte were nobles.

They were born as nobles and have lived as nobles.

They had lived for appearances and superficiality.

Even if they were charmed by Isolte, there was none whom they would willingly abandon their family to marry.

Part 3

Isolte was troubled.

She'd been searching for a husband for several years now.

It mostly seemed to be going well, but things always tripped up at the last step.

"At this rate it looks like I won't be able to marry before the succession." Is what she thought.

She was confident.

She had good looks, cooking skill, and was well versed in make up.

There wasn't a day she missed the upkeep of her hair and skin.

She was well-versed in conversation as Water God style training included such skills in its curriculum.

Skills for provoking the opponent and taking the initiative.

Putting them into practise, flattery is simple.

But she was still having to exert herself.

Despite all that, she couldn't get married.

Even Eris and Nina had managed to find partners but she still couldn't.

Well it was probably be because they had childhood friends.
There was no law that stated she had to marry.
But she still thought she could overcome that with her own charm.

She was self-conscious.
But she thought that her ideal partner would eventually show himself due to her unceasing effort.

“How many has it been now?”
“...That was the 21st.”

21 people had now turned her down.
Including the one’s she, herself had turned down, the number was much higher.

“I see.”

Right now, Isolte was sitting in her living room facing her brother.

Isolte’s brother, Tantris Cruel, was a high level Water God style swordsman.
He was the oldest son of the Cruel house but compared to his little sister, he couldn’t be considered especially talented.
He put forth enough effort to make his blood run, but in the end he didn’t have the talent to advance any higher.

But he’s an honest man.
His grandmother, Reida, had told him “Maybe it’s time to make you a saint class.” but he had said “I dont need a title unbecoming of my stature.” and rejected the offer.
Even when Reida was alive, he’d been in charge of the dojo’s administration.
And he’d even looked after Isolte.

“Do you think you’re aiming too high?”
“No I don’t think...”
“You have a certain level of talent and standing. You have the right to choose a suitable partner. But if you’re too picky and can’t find anyone, there’s no point.”
“I understand that.”

Isolte had always looked up to her brother.
The two of them had lost their parents at an early age.
Luckily their grandmother was the Water God and they didn’t have to struggle

to survive, but she was a busy woman and didn't have much time to look after the two of them.

At that time, it was Tantris who took over as the parent.

He had supported her after their parents died and raised her.

The school of swordsmanship is a world of ability.

The talented Isolte surpassed her brother in under 10 years.

But she never stopped looking up to him, and he never stopped supporting her.

"There's no need to think about the honour of the Cruel house.

Living as the Water God, a harsh fate no doubt awaits you.

Forget about status and lineage and pick someone you're comfortable with."

"..."

Tantris was already married and had a child.

Of course they had met with Isolte and talked with her about it.

But Isolte hadn't thought she was very likeable.

She was the daughter of an Asuran noble.

Her father had sent her to get married to create a relationship with the Water God Reida.

She obviously looked down on Tantris and had no understanding of Swordplay.

She had never once come to the dojo.

Aside from things relating to the children, the two mostly lived apart.

Isolte didn't want to marry someone like that.

It's exactly because of that, that Isolte had been so careful in choosing.

...Although her carefulness extended only to stripping away their facade's.

But she had stuck by the requirement of at least intermediate level swordsmanship.

She had no intention of fussing over lineage.

But now that she had become the main instructor, she would have many chances to meet with Ariel and talk to her and there were many coming to meet with her who wanted to take advantage of that.

A fallen noble, a commoner, or an adventurer would have been fine.

As long as they're able to make up for it in some other way.

"I have no intention of choosing."

“Then are you ok with someone I choose for you?”

“No, I should be allowed to search for my own partner.”

And she was also very stubborn.

Of course there’s also the fact that everyone Tantris recommended were nothing but muscleheads...

Although you couldn’t call her picky, she absolutely wouldn’t concede on her conditions.

It really didn’t seem likely that she would be able to marry.

“Right...”

Tantris had no intention of blaming her.

It wouldn’t be the first time the Water God was without a spouse.

And he could continue the Cruel line himself.

But he still wanted to help his little sister find happiness.

And if his sister wanted to find happiness in marriage, he wanted to support her.

That said, if she didn’t want his help, he had no intention of pursuing. Although he didn’t have much talent, he was still a man of the Water God school.

“Oh right, Isolte, didn’t Her Majesty summon you today?”

“...Yes.”

“Are you fine on time?”

“I’m still good.”

“Just in case, you shouldn’t keep Her Majesty waiting. We’ll stop the conversation here today. Have a safe trip.”

“Yes brother.¹ I’ll be off now.”

Isolte said that, bowed, and returned to her own room.

After that she changed and headed for the Imperial Palace.

After seeing her off, Tantris breathed a sigh of relief.

“Haaa...”

At this rate it’ll probably be impossible for her to get married before the succession ceremony.

After thinking that, Tantris returned to the dojo and resumed his instruction of the younger disciples.

Part 4

Isolte walked to the Asura Kingdom's Silver Palace.
The crest of the shield bearing battle girl carved onto the breastplate of the silver armour is one that is famed throughout the land.
Her white and blue coat fluttered through the air as she marched forward.

The patrolling soldiers stood at attention with admiration in their gazes as she walked towards the palace.

There isn't anybody in the Asuran Imperial Palace who doesn't know the name of the Water Emperor Isolte.
And there are many soldiers who yearn for her dignified figure.
By the way, there aren't many who know that she's been having thoughts along the lines of "I don't want to get married too late." or "I hope a good guy would fall from the sky."

"Why if it isn't Isolte-dono, where are you headed?"

The person standing in front of her was a single man.
He was short and lanky with thin hair, overall he seemed very timid.
He looked about 40 years old.
He was human, but if Rudeus saw him, he'd probably think "He's looks like a senile old man."²

No matter how you looked at him, he didn't seem like a knight or a swordsman, but he was wearing the same silver breast plate as Isolte.
But his armour had a slightly different design.
His crest was a girl praying with a rampart crown atop her head.

"Well if it isn't Lord Ifrit. My good graces to you sir."
"Ahh, be at ease. We are of the same rank, there is no need kneel."

Sylvester Ifrit.
One of the Seven Knights of Asura The 『King's Rampart』.
He with a name that didn't match his face, was the chief executive in charge of

the defence of the Imperial Palace.

Isolte was only a knight.

Knights were of a fairly low class, whereas nobility was quite high.

And Sylvester held the highest position among all knights and soldiers, and was also a middle ranked noble.

Normally any servant who crossed his path would immediately fall to their knees.

“But...”

“We are both knights of Her Majesty.”

In response to his sharp words, Isolte stood back up.

“That is sufficient. We do not work for the country, but for Her Majesty. The only person you should kneel before is Her Majesty, herself.”

In response to Sylvester’s rising aura, she swallowed her words and nodded.

Sylvester was of small stature.

He was prone to illness and could not be called strong.

He was in no way skilled with swords or magic.

And yet in spite of that, he had managed to graduate as the valedictorian of the knight academy.

He raises people up and is well versed at command.

He truly understood the meaning of the phrase, “Right person for the right job.” And for that one talent, Ariel dragged him out from an obscure corner of the country, called him back to the palace, and appointed him as her knight.

“By the way Isolte-dono, where might you be heading?”

“Her Majesty has called for me.”

“If that is the case then you haven’t the time to be wasting it with someone like me.”

“Did you have some business with me?”

“It’s nothing major.

There’s simply a man I would like to introduce you to.

I hope you’ll forgive the selfishness of my foolish son, but time permitting, if you are interested, I hope you’ll at least have a couple of words with him.”

This was a conversation Isolte very much was interested in.
She wanted to hear more about this foolish son of his.
But she was currently being called by her lord.

“I understand. When I have the time, I’ll come and we can finish the conversation.”

But she simply said that with a stiff face and headed off

On her way to the inner palace, the amount of people decreased.
The simply dressed soldiers began to become scarce, being replaced by lavish knights.
These lower ranked nobles, befitting of their titles’ as knights, had all pledged allegiance to Ariel.
Those who had an extremely small chance of betrayal.

And in the inner section of the inner palace, there were even fewer people.
By now the soldiers and knights had disappeared and she was walking through an empty hallway.
Occasionally, there was a frighteningly sharp looking maid — The Imperial Maids — passing by.
These Imperial Maids were personally chosen by Ariel.
There possibility of betrayal was even lower.

Ariel was in the 『King’s Chamber』.
Standing in front of the extravagant door was a single man.
He was completely covered in golden armour and holding a giant battleaxe.
The Asura Kingdom’s greatest gatekeeper.
The possibility of him betraying Ariel was non-existent.

“Isolte Cruel! Reporting for summons!”
“...Yessir.”

Doga had received Isolte’s introduction and slowly moved.
They seemed like clunky movements.
But Isolte couldn’t see a single opening.
If it came to it, he could swing that battleaxe of his at terrifying speeds.
And if it came to it, breaking past this man and passing through the door behind him would be nigh on impossible.

“...Hm?”

Doga had extended his hand towards Isolte.
Isolte saw that and looked confused.

Doga had a simple face.
It wasn't crude but Isolte wasn't fond of it.
Being searched by someone like that sparked a slight amount of resistance in her.

“Body search? Go ahead.”

But this was the Queen's room.
And obviously, even her knights could not be permitted to bring weapons into the room.
Doga understood that weapons could not be brought into her room.
Even against the prime minister of the Asura Kingdom, Doga would still carry out his meticulous search and not even the smallest of things would get past him.

The body search was a matter of course.
While wondering if he was going to touch her breasts, Isolte silently decided to bear with it.

“Yessir.”

But Doga didn't touch her.
What his extended hand had touched was her hair.
Doga moved his hand up to her hair and grabbed something out of it

“...?”

In Doga's fingers was a flower petal.

“Follow me.”

“?”
“Isolte is pretty, so you can't have these kinds of things on you.”

Doga was smiling under his helmet.
Isolte stood there stiff with a blank expression.

“Aah, my weapon.”

Isolte suddenly thought that and unfastened her sword belt and presented it to Doga.

Doga didn't even take that.

"Isolte is Ariel-sama's knight. For you to protect Ariel, a weapon is necessary."
"..."

He didn't conduct a body search.

He didn't take her weapon.

He trusted her as Ariel's knight.

The man who possessed the ability to join the 5 fingers of the Asura Empire.

Thinking about it like that, her heart rate slightly increased.

(No, not with that face...)

She took a deep breath to calm her buzzing head.

"Isolte Cruel! Entering!"

"Come in."

She waited for Ariel's response and entered.

Part 5

The Seven Knights of Asura.

With Luke Notos Greyrat, the『King's Dagger』as the head, they are seven knights who have sworn absolute allegiance to Ariel herself.

Even among knights they possessed a special position and independent movement was permitted to some extent.

Isolte was also a member.

The『King's Greatshield』.

To defend the King at all times, a fitting name for a Water God style swordsman.

Isolte, Sylvester, Doga.

These three are known as the『Three Knights of the Left』.

Among the seven knights of Asura their main job was the protection of Ariel.

But Isolte felt something was off.

The seven knights of Asura were knights who had pledged absolute allegiance to Ariel.

At least that's what was said.

Because Isolte hadn't gathered with them and met them yet, she wasn't deeply informed about them.

They may have pledged loyalty to Ariel, but most of them are unrelated to the Asura kingdom, having been gathered from outside.

They most likely each have their own reasons to unconditionally serve Ariel.

But Isolte was different.

Isolte had a reason to betray.

The previous Water God.

The moment when her grandmother had died.

The death of the previous Water God Reida

During Ariel's battle for the crown she had been killed by Ariel's supporter, the Dragon God, Orsted.

Of course, it had happened during a battle.

Isolte was a warrior who had no intention of harbouring unnecessary emotions after a battle had come to a close.

This was because before she was Isolte's grandmother, she was the Water God. If she were to defy Ariel, more so than the Asura Empire, the Water God school would see to her banishment.

And thus, she wouldn't think of defying Ariel.

Isolte's resolve was clear on that.

But no matter how sure of it she was herself, if all she had was words, nobody could be certain it was the truth.

Nobody could see the depths of another's heart.

It was entirely possible that after her grandmother had been killed, she had been secretly harbouring hatred and secretly aiming for Ariel's life.

Or maybe instead of Ariel, she could be aiming for the perpetrator, Orsted.

In truth, when Ariel was taking the crown, she had a large number of knights and nobles killed.

And the amount of people who still hold grudges was not small.

They continue their everyday lives having pledged loyalty to Ariel, awaiting their opportunity.

It wouldn't be strange for Isolte to be thinking the same way.

Isolte had sworn the knights oath and pledged loyalty to Ariel. But it wasn't because of Ariel's personality, nor was it due to patriotism. It was to protect her honour and place as Water God. She was currently protecting their relationship of mutual trust, but if that was jeopardised, it's possible that she couldn't guarantee absolute loyalty.

It's not as if she thought of betrayal. It's simply that the possibility exists. That's something that Isolte herself understood.

And yet in spite of that, she was chosen as one of the seven.

She was uneasy. There had to be some kind of catch.

"Isolte, do you have any intention of considering a marriage candidate of my referral?"

Which is why, even in the face of that suggestion, she was weary.

"Why would your Majesty mention such a proposal?"
"To me, having you, the Water God, settle down with a family would be a plus to your work.
The candidates are all of my blood, and there are many who possess rather particular sexual dispositions among them... But there has to be one who matches your tastes."
"Of your blood... Do you mean to say that they're royalty!?"
"Yes, that is the case."

A marriage interview with royalty. Hearing that did not cause excitement in Isolte. It was of little matter.

"But when I become the Water God they will have to abandon their household, for royalty, isn't that somewhat inconvenient?"
"Even without the name, their blood still remains. They do not have to actively

cut off their family do they?"

"That is the case."

"It's fine. They all acknowledge this condition.

They have been promised that if they marry you, the support of the royal family will not be withdrawn.

All you need to do is meet with them and pick the most good natured out of the bunch."

This was definitely a ploy to win her over, is what Isolte thought. Because the conditions were too favourable.

Ariel's relatives, royalty.

They may only be a branch, but these are people who could be called genuine princes.

They aren't the sons of nobles, they are people, no matter how small, have the possibility to become king. A true Prince.

And all those of the Asuran royal family are good looking and refined.

"How does it sound? It's not a bad deal right?"

"Please allow me!"

Isolte gave an immediate reply.

She didn't have a reason to refuse.

If she was a sly Asuran noble, she may have taken the time to consider the hidden meaning behind Ariel's words.

But unfortunately she was just a swordsman.

Although she may have been a girl searching for a husband.

She didn't care about anything complex.

"Then sometime in the near future we'll begin the marriage interviews. Please convey to Luke or Sylvester on which days you are free. You can leave the rest to me."

"Yes ma'am, I thank you for your kindness."

"Understood. Then, you may leave."

Isolte withdrew from Ariel's private room in a dreamy state of mind.

(A marriage interview with royalty...)

Isolte was somewhat light on her feet and her heart was beating with

excitement.

She was going to go tell Sylvester to book her closest day off.

When she thought that, she suddenly realised that she was quite thirsty.

It must have been nervousness from being called out for an unknown reason.

“I’m quite thirsty...”

“Yessir.”

While mumbling to herself, suddenly being called out to from behind caused Isolte to fall into stance and turn around.

And Doga was standing there.

The huge man standing there with the small cup.

“Here, it’s cold.”

“Thank you very much.”

Isolte took it and after wondering for a moment whether there was poison in it, drank it down.

Like Doga said, it was cold as if it had been ice just moments ago and her thirst was quenched.

Feeling the water permeate the depths of her body, she realised that she was far more nervous and tired than she had thought.

“...Haaa.”

“Isolte, good work.”

Doga drank some water took a breath and gave a smile.

Even through the helmet, she could tell that that smile had no ulterior motives and was simply an honest gesture.

“...”

She was a perceptive person.

She realised that she wouldn’t hesitate to leave her back to this man.

Although she wasn’t fond of his face.

“Good work to you too Doga. Best wishes with your guard duty.”

“Yessir.”

Well that’s something in and of itself.

Reminding herself of the upcoming marriage interviews, that she’d be spending

the next few days absorbed in, she cut off the conversation and walked off smiling.



Author Q&A

Q: Not being able to beat Doga even after becoming the water God, does this mean that her ability is below the World Power class?

A: It’s not that she can’t win.
It’s just that she practises defence techniques, so breaking past Doga to get into the room would be quite hard.

Q: Isolte-san is worn out!
A: It’s just that she doesn’t have an eye for people.
She’s quite capable as a swordsman.

Q: Is Doga’s face bad?
A: He has a harmless looking face.
He’s a looks like a good person.

Translator Notes and References

- 1. Aninue.
- 2. Literally “Windowsill race” and it’s an expression that means old employees that have been given menial tasks until they retire.

Chapter 8: The Gatekeeper Doga — First Part

Part 1

In the Asura Kingdom there's a group known as the Seven Knights of Asura. They are those who have pledged absolute loyalty to Ariel Anemoi Asura.

Leading them:

The『King's Dagger』Luke Notos Greyrat.

In charge of offence are the Three Knights of the Left-Wing:

The『King's Greatsword』Sándor von Grandeur.

The『King's Halberd』Oswald Eurus Greyrat.

The『King's Hound』Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

In charge of defence are the Three Knights of the Right-Wing:

The『King's Gatekeeper』Doga.

The『King's Rampart』Sylvester Ifrit.

The『King's Greatshield』Isolte Cruel.

Seven people.

There are those whose birth and descent are clear,

but others were those who Ariel and Luke had personally scouted.

From commoners and lower ranked nobles to high ranking officials, there was even a half Immortal among them.

But what they shared was their undying loyalty towards Ariel.

While Isolte is pondering the true meaning behind the “particular” in Ariel's statement “rather particular sexual dispositions”, let's take a look at one of those knights.

Part 2

He was born in a small village of the Asura Kingdom's Donati province.

He was a little slow and treated like a henchman by the other kids.

But his body was strong and he never got sick.

His father was a soldier who protected the village and spent most of his days away.

There were very few soldiers so he didn't get many days off and ended up spending most nights away from home.

When the boy was around 5 years old, his little sister was born. She was a sweet girl just like her mother. But the mother had a difficult time recovering from childbirth and passed away.

The boy cried. He was hit by his friends and he was stung by a bee, but the stupefied boy continued to cry. The crying boy's father said this to him:

"Right now you can cry, but when you stop, you have to protect this girl."

Holding his little sister, the boy looked up at his father and nodded many times over. And that day, the boy stopped crying.

The next day the boy began faithfully practising to realise his father's command. The command to protect his sister.

To protect his sister he began to guard the entrance to his house. The whole day, holding a hatchet he found in the corner of the house, he stood at the entrance. Only when his sister cried did he leave his post, in order to comfort her.

Seeing his figure, his friend laughed. "The hell you doing?" he said. "You can just watch from inside," he said.

The adults of the village had said this to him: "If you want you can leave your sister to us." "There are already plenty of children at our house so one more won't matter."

But the boy firmly refused to hear it. He had them teach him how to take care of her, but he would not entrust his sister to anyone else.

One day.

An incident occurred at the village.

In the middle of the night, something had snuck into the barn and laid waste to the livestock.

From the footprints' size it was judged to be a wolf.

Soldiers were running around telling the villagers to stay inside and lock their doors.

The next day.

A single house had been attacked.

The wolf had gotten in through who knows where, instantly bit off a child's head, and escaped through a window.

After waking up, without knowing what happened, the family simply chased after the blood trail.

And on the outskirts of town, finding children's clothing in a pool of blood, they went crazy.

These two incidents made the soldiers realise that they were mistaken in their judgement.

It wasn't a wolf that was hiding in the village, but a magic beast.

It was only the size of a regular wolf, but it was a cunning magic beast.

The perpetrator was a magic beast.

Its head and hind legs were that of a wolf's.

But from the shoulder down it was a monkey. It could walk on two legs and climb trees.

It was only about the size of a large dog.

But its head was oddly large in comparison to its body.

And that head gave it intelligence.

It was a mutated magic beast.

The magic beast who wondered what humans tasted like, was lurking in the wheat fields as if ridiculing the frightened villagers, searching for its next target.

But the adults didn't return to the field that day.

The wolf chased after them but looked in the wrong place.

What was left in the house were two children.

The magic beast, licking its lips, used its monkey arms to climb the chimney, descending into the fireplace.

The next day.

The boy's father who had finished his patrol saw a trail of blood coming from his own house.

"This can't be," he thought with an ashen face as he ran inside his house. He soon found the cruel corpse of the figure left behind.

It was the corpse of the magic beast.

The corpse of the beast with its head smashed open.

And between the corpse and his daughter was his son, standing imposingly, clutching his hatchet.

He could see that the beast was dead.

The boy was covered in blood and his arm was broken.

But that was all.

The magic beast was small but it did resemble a wolf.

It was several times bigger than the boy.

And in spite of that, the boy had beaten it to death with his blunt hatchet.

He had protected his sister.

That was the boy's — who would later become known at the North Emperor Doga — first battle.

Part 3

From thereon the life of the gatekeeper Doga continued.

When he was ten, he protected the entrance to his village.

Right before the teleport incident, a wild stampede of magic beasts occurred. They swelled forth from a forest in the kingdom and some number of villages suffered.

Some were even engulfed and completely destroyed.

Doga's village was among those attacked.

But Doga, with his dauntless courage and hatchet, diverted the swarm.

It's said that he defeated nearly a hundred beasts during the battle,
And although he had defeated so many, his father had passed away during.
Doga simply stood bewildered next to his father's body.
The knights who saw Doga's courage recommended him to the imperial
garrison.

Seeing Doga hesitate for the sake of protecting his sister, they said this:

“Listen boy, we've been separated from our families and move all over the
kingdom protecting villages.

In other words, we protect the very country itself.

As long as the country is at peace, our families can live in safety.

Meaning that protecting the country is protecting your family.”

At that time, the simple-minded Doga didn't understand those words.
In the end, what caused Doga to move was money.

After his father had died, he needed money. He had heard that he would be
able to get the money for the two of them to live in the Imperial capital and
decided to move there.

Doga entered the Imperial army.
He was in charge of protecting a small gate cutting off the slums from lower
class residences.
In case those of the slums tried to riot, it would create a bottleneck preventing
them from swarming.
Besides the fact that passage was prohibited at night, it wasn't a particularly
important gate.

He and his sister had been allocated a single room.
It was small, but it was home.
He would commute from there to his post each day and man it from dawn till
dusk and sometimes even all night.

Doga was a simple man, but he had a strange charm to him.
At first the other soldiers didn't look kindly towards a ten year old working with
them and there were many who harassed him.
But due to his honest personality and his resolute attitude towards his sister, his
co-workers began to relax somewhat and in about a year's time began to
recognise Doga as a comrade.

Two years later.

One night, a certain girl ran towards the gate he was guarding.

The girl clung to Doga and asked him to save her.

While Doga was hesitating, a group of men with harsh glares appeared and yelled, "Hand us the woman!".

Doga was bewildered and had no idea what to do.

If Doga's watch partner Hans hadn't been dozing off, he probably could have come to a decision.

The woman, seeing Doga confused, quickly ran towards the gate.

Doga immediately grabbed her by the back of the neck and pulled her back, Because passage is prohibited during the night.

But in that instant,

Sensing that the woman was trying to run away, they gave chase.

Doga swung his battleaxe.

He had gotten the axe as a farewell gift from the village blacksmith.

All of them died.

Seeing Doga covered in blood, the woman wet herself and sunk to the ground.

Hans woke from the noise and was taken aback by the scene before him.

"This is bad," he thought.

Doga, who had killed them all, would be punished.

And he, who had been dozing off, would also be punished.

While thinking that, with his face ghastly white, he went to confirm the bodies.

After seeing their faces, he realised that they were members of the violent thieves' guild that had mixed in with the lower class citizens.

The knights stationed at the slums were lacking manpower and couldn't do very much to them.

But Doga had annihilated them all.

Doga was promoted.

From a soldier who protected the entrance to the slums,

To guarding the gate that connects the lower and middle class districts.

And for some reason Hans came with him.

Doga continued to protect that gate for some time after that.
Through rain and wind he continued to protect it.
Even as he grew up he continued to protect it.
Hans had saved the simple Doga.
Eventually, Hans became the person who understood Doga the best.

And in that time, his little sister grew more and more beautiful and married Hans.
Or maybe, Hans had been aiming for Doga's sister.
But to Doga, it didn't matter either way.
Because, although Hans was always sleepy, he wasn't a bad guy.
For his sister's sake, Doga bore witness to their vows to Saint Millis.

And Doga was alone.
Now that his sister was married, he thought about how he had completed his father's order to the very end.
There wasn't any need to guard the gate anymore.

But Doga continued to guard it.
Through rain and wind he continued to protect it.

One day, massive news spread like a wave all throughout the capital.
It was declared that Ariel Anemoi Asura would be crowned Queen.
For several days, festivals continued throughout the city.
Doga and his comrades were excited and Hans was jumping for joy.

But a soldier's work increased during a festival.
Their guard post was moved from the middle class district to somewhere else.
The kingdom was recruiting temporary civilian soldiers, so real soldiers like Doga were given much more important duties.
And in turn, their wages increased.
Doga and Hans thought they could use the extra money to buy his sister something nice and worked hard.

On a certain day before the coronation.
Due to some twist of fate, Doga was stationed at the back door of the palace.
It was a fairly disused door where occasionally someone with a permit would come through.

Hans wasn't with him.

Doga was with several other soldiers.

A single man wearing a worn-out armour and holding a long pole came along.
He said:

"Could you let me through here? I'd like an audience with Her Majesty Ariel."

Of course the guards refused him.

"You may not pass without permission! Show us your permit!"

"I don't have a permit, but I'd like an audience with Her Majesty Ariel."

"You may not pass without a permit! Leave!"

"Then it can't be helped. I thought I might have darkened Her Majesty's authority on this auspicious day, I'm glad I came through this back door."

The man said that and began to force his way through.

His pole moved like magic and the other guards were defeated in an instant.

Only Doga remained.

No matter how many times the pole was thrust at his vitals, Doga continued to stand and protect the gate.

But at the same time, Doga's axe didn't hit the man even once.

Having his axe miss was a first for Doga, but he continued to single-mindedly swing.

The man was extremely happy to fight Doga.

"Wonderful! For a man like this to be buried here!

Right, For your sake I'll give up on this gate.

I'm really sorry about this.

As an apology, would you be willing to become my disciple?

You'll definitely become strong, you have talent!."

Doga didn't understand what the man was saying.

Hearing that the man was going to give up on the gate caused Doga to hesitate for an instant

It truly was but an instant.

And when Doga awoke, the man was still there.

Doga picked up his axe and stood to protect the gate.

But he was surrounded by a large number of soldiers.

“Well good morning! I protected the gate in your stead!”

That was how Doga met Sándor, North God Kalman the Second, Alex C Ryback.

Part 4

The day he became Sándor’s disciple, Doga returned to his house, collapsed on his bed, and slept like a log.

Thanks to the healing magician that came with the reinforcements, there wasn’t a single wound left on him.

But his battle with North God Kalman had completely emptied his nearly bottomless stamina.

It was the first time in his life that he had collapsed from exhaustion.

After sleeping for two straight days, he awoke.

Next to his bed was his crying sister and a relieved Hans.

And Sándor with a happy look on his face.

“Morning! Now my disciple, let us be off!”

Sándor used his tremendous strength to lift Doga to his feet and after Doga had put his armour on, he began to drag him out to who knows where.

Doga, without knowing what from, asked Hans to save him.

“Sorry Doga, but it doesn’t seem like a bad thing.

I don’t have any idea what’s going on either but I think it’s a pretty prestigious offer.

So well, why don’t you just give it a try? Work hard, I’ll be heading out now.”

“Ok. Brother, good luck.”

Although Hans had seemed to understand the basic gist of it, Doga was still confused.

But he didn’t have the strenght to go against Sándor, and they headed to the gate he guarded yesterday.

After they reached the gate, Sándor took out a rather gaudy permit and they passed through.

And before long they were in the inner palace.
While Doga was constantly surprised by the dazzling rooms around them, Sándor had noticed something.

What they had seen was the beautiful golden haired woman in front of them.

“Is that him?”

“Yes Your Majesty!”

“I’d like to talk to him.”

Coming out from behind Sándor, Doga stood in front of the woman.
The woman was extremely beautiful and above all sublime.

“I am Ariel Anemoi Asura. What would your name be?”

Doga didn’t know that name.

Doga was on guard duty and hadn’t heard her name at the coronation ceremony.

And of course, he hadn’t seen her before either.

But once he realised, Doga fell to his knees.
Somehow he felt that he had to.

“I-I’m... Doga.”

“Why did you become a soldier?”

“M-my dad told me to pr-protect my sister...”

Doga wasn’t all that good at talking.
In all his life, although he listened to plenty of other people, he had never said very much.

But the words that came from his mouth had convinced Ariel.

“To protect your sister, a splendid goal.”

“B-but, Hans is already protecting my sister, so Hans and my sister are together and um,”

The soldier next to Ariel had added “His sister is married to a soldier named Hans”.

Doga didn’t know, but it was Luke.

“So she doesn’t really need me to protect her anymore...”

Doga looked downhearted as he said that but Ariel smiled.

“That is incorrect Doga.”

“Hmm?”

“You cannot stop looking after her.”

“What do you mean?”

“Hans has become your brother, so you must now protect both your brother and your sister. Your work has doubled.”

Those words caused Doga a shock.

He hadn't thought about it like that before.

But she was correct.

Hans addressed Doga as a brother.

Hans was his brother.

If he was to protect his sister, he would obviously protect his brother.

“R-right! I have to keep protecting them!”

“Yes, but with your current method, it's possible that you may not be able to protect them both.”

“Wha!? Why?”

“You are strong, but your arms are short. If those two are to fall into danger, it's possible that you may be too far to help.”

Doga looked at his hands.

He remembered his father's death.

He had been close by, but had been killed by a beast outside of Doga's vision.

“Th-then, what should I do?”

“Protect me.”

“Wha?”

“I work for the sake of the country to improve it. To protect me, is to protect this country. And to protect the country is to protect those two.”

Doga didn't understand.

Why would protecting the person in front of him, protect those two?

He had no clue.

But the way Ariel said it had left him with no doubt.

And at the same time, he remembered something similar someone once said to

him.

The knight who had recommended him to the imperial capital.

“Listen boy, we’ve been separated from our families and move all over the kingdom protecting villages.

In other words, we protect the very country itself.

As long as the country is at peace, our families can live in safety.

Meaning that protecting the country is protecting your family.”

Back then, he hadn’t understood.

Because he didn’t get it, he moved for money.

But now, he somewhat understood.

Because Doga is protecting something in a completely different place, Hans and his sister can live in peace.

“Doga. Would you swear loyalty to me and protect not only I, but the kingdom as well?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“Then Doga, I now appoint you a knight.”

That day, Doga became one of the Seven Knights of Asura.

Part 5

Since then, Doga had continued to protect the Final Door.

The Final Door, the entrance to the King’s chambers.

At times he would head out on Ariel’s orders.

Once a day, not too far from Ariel’s door, he would receive instruction from Sándor.

And once a month on his day off, he would go visit his sister and Hans to eat with them.

When Doga wasn’t around, someone else was protecting the king’s door in his stead.

Much of the time it was the『King’s Greatshield』, Isolte Cruel.

But it wasn’t like that to start with.

He was appointed a knight and presented with a shiny set of golden armour.

And after taking his post he did not move.

After he had decided to protect it, he couldn't leave it to someone with half hearted resolve.

For an entire month, he left the door to no one other than Sándor. If he wasn't ordered to rest by Ariel, he would have continued standing there without even eating for days.

He would check anyone approaching the King's chambers. Gender had no relevance, and would even take the smallest fork.

And in that time, someone had joined the Seven Knights. The『King's Greatshield』, Isolte Cruel. She was the head instructor and in the time before Ghyslaine joined, was the only female member and eventually took the job of Ariel's personal guard.

One day. Sándor, for the sake of finding members to join the Golden Knight Order, was to search the kingdom. Without Sándor, Doga had no replacement. After an entire month of standing without break, Doga collapsed. Sándor decided that Isolte and Doga were to have a match.

At that point, Sándor named Doga a『North King』. Although Sándor had only recently started teaching him, Doga was quite skilled.

But it goes without saying, it was Isolte's overwhelming victory. Doga's battleaxe was warded off like a gentle breeze. Time after time, he was countered and eventually defeated. It was to the extent that if they had been using real swords, Isolte could have killed him in an instant if she wished. Doga continued to attack Isolte with his inexhaustible stamina but couldn't lay a single finger on her and was defeated.

The slender woman who was like a flower, continued to blow off the axe that was bigger than herself and continued to attack. As Doga took that hit over and over, he had to admit: She was someone fit to protect the door in his stead.

And at the same time, he understood,

This woman was a graceful and lovely flower.
Something he could not touch.

Doga had fallen in love with Isolte.

Part 6

“You seem pretty down lately...”

Doga was having dinner with his sister’s family when he was told that. In front of the simple looking Doga were a number of dishes on the table. And on the other side of the table was his sister and her husband Hans. And sitting across from Hans was their daughter. Doga was sitting there blankly filling his mug of wine to the brim.

“Are you not feeling well?”

“...Wh-why?”

Having perceived unrest in Doga’s heart, Hans pointed to the food.

“Eat it all up alright.”

Looking at it, it was obvious to see that he hadn’t eaten much. It was his beloved sister’s cooking. Normally, Doga would be wolfing down his food in silence, swallowing enough to make his cheeks bulge with a happy look on his face. Along with his favourite wine. He loved wine that was normally reserved for special occasions, so much so that he would even drink it here. And for that reason, Hans made sure to always have a barrel ready at their house.

But for some reason, he hadn’t even eaten half his food and the way he was drinking his wine seemed somehow worn out. To those who knew Doga, something was definitely off.

“If you aren’t feeling well, why don’t you go see the castle’s healers? You’re already a knight, if you ask, surely they’d do that much for you? Well at least you don’t look too bad.”

“...?”

Doga puzzlingly tilted his head.
He himself didn't realise something was off.

"If you're tired, why not get a little more rest? I know that working as a guard for her majesty is a prestigious job and all. But if you were working too hard and collapsed, it wouldn't be a joke... Well, I can't really imagine you collapsing though."
"Yessir."

Doga nodded and started eating.
But he was definitely odd.
It was, as always, delicious.

But the second the food went down his throat, he felt something off.
Normally, he would chew and swallow so fast, you'd want to tell him to slow down.
But not this time.
Each time he reached to put something in his mouth, a feeling of rejection welled up from his stomach.
As if he was full, but much more unpleasant.

The wine was also odd.
It wasn't all that nice.
He'd normally look refreshed after taking a swig, but now he looked somewhat sick.

"If something happened, tell us."
"..."

Hans began to press the silent Doga for answers.

"Mr. brother-in-law, no, Doga. Ever since we were stationed together in the slums, I've always been grateful to you. If you can't even let me help you... How can I keep living with myself? How could I show my face to saint Millis?"
"Yessir. But, I don't get it either."
"Lately, has there been something at the castle? Anything? Tell us."

Doga raised his head and saw Hans's serious look.
Doga, like he was told, started to look back in his memory and slowly began talking.

While guarding the Final Gate, a cat had wandered by. He had just finished his lunch and it made him happy.

While walking through the town in his armour, a young soldier had called out to him “You’re my idol!” and it made him happy.

While he was guarding the Final Gate, Isolte had come by and when he took a leaf out of her hair, she thanked him and it made him happy.

When Sándor was teaching him a new technique and complimented him, it made him happy.

When he was walking back to the soldiers’ lodgings, and a carriage driver nearly ran him over yelling “Beat it dumbass!” but Luke came out from it and even walked him back and that made him happy.

When he arrived at the training ground on Sándor’s orders and Ghyslaine and Isolte were there, it made him happy.

When he heard the rumor that “Isolte might be getting married” from a Royal Guard, it didn’t make him all that happy.

When he was guarding a party, Isolte appeared in a dress and looked really pretty. Seeing her in a dress made him happy.

When he saw her dance with some guy he didn’t know, it didn’t make him very happy.

When he saw some nobles’ sons talkin’ smack about Isolte behind her back, it didn’t make him very happy.

When he saw Isolte walking around with some cool guy it made him sad.

When Isolte—

“That’s enough, I get it. I understand everything.”

Hans interrupted Doga’s story.

He had basically understood.

“So basically, you’ve fallen for this Isolte.”

” ... ”

Doga’s face began to redden.

He didn’t know why he ended up telling them, but Hans was exactly right.

“And then, when you heard Isolte was getting married and saw that she was in favour of it, it was a shock to you.”

“Yessir.”

Having it said to him so bluntly, Doga head fell even further.
It seemed that Hans was right again.

“I get it.”

Seeing Doga’s reaction, Hans understood.
It really seemed like his brother-in-law had fallen in love.

And at the same time, Hans began to remember his first love.
The only daughter of the greengrocer who lived next-door in his hometown.
There was an age gap of 5 years, but that didn’t change the fact that they were
childhood friends. She had looked after him since they were little.
She was a kind, reliable, and pretty older sister.

He had liked her since age 5.

He dreamt of marrying her in the future.

When he grew up, he would apply to be a soldier and after his income
stabilised, he would propose. Or that was the plan.

When Hans was 12 she married the butcher’s son and the two of them
succeeded his family business.

Hans knew him and by Hans’s judgement, he was already an old man.

Although they were only separated by 5 years, so he really wasn’t that old.

At first he didn’t believe it.

He was well built, but by no means handsome.

He thought she was against it and would eventually return to him.

But after a year she was curling close to him with a happy smile on her face, and
after seeing the large bulge on her stomach, he finally understood. That night,
his pillow was wet with tears.

Perhaps, if he had confessed his feeling for her earlier, he wouldn’t have had
to have felt like that.

But that’s not to say he was unhappy right now.

If he had married her, he wouldn’t have married Doga’s sister.

Doga’s sister was both like and unlike him. She was a sweet and confident
woman with a small figure.

And the product of their love was now eating Doga’s food in his stead.
She was a healthy child.

Hans was confident that he was the happiest man in the world.

But he had that happiness because he had suffered heartbreak. Because of that experience, the moment he realised he was in love with Doga's sister, he took action.

It may have looked frivolous at first. But from beginning to end, Hans had been completely sincere with Doga's sister. And he was that much more serious in his gatekeeping job. Since the day he confessed, he didn't touch another woman. And because of that, he had triumphed over his rivals and managed to obtain what he had today.

For that reason, Hans said:

"Go propose to Isolte right now."

Hearing that, Doga looked up, confused.

"No, you don't need to propose, being friends is fine. If you can tell her you like her, that's enough."

"..."

"If you sit here and do nothing, you're going to regret it."

"...But."

"Don't think about trying to keep the status quo. You're a member of the Asura Kingdom's famous Golden Knights. You're what we garrison members aspire to be. Raise your head with pride."

Doga thought for a while. Doga had no idea how his lineage matched up to Isolte. But in appearances, Doga knew. The impeccable beauty, Isolte, didn't match him. He had thought a lot about that.

"It's fine if it doesn't go anywhere, just tell her and get rejected. At this rate, you won't even be able to give her marriage your blessing."

But with Hans's words, he reached a conclusion.

“Yessir!”

He would confess to Isolte.

—○●○—

Chapter 9: Isolte & Doga — Final Part

Part 1

“How many has it been now?”

Right now, Isolte was in her house connected to the Dojo.

Sitting in the living room opposite her brother.

“...He was the 26th.”

Isolte said that as she hung her head.

Tantris tried to look her in the eyes, but she averted her gaze.

“There’s a rumour going around that you’ve given up.”

“...Yeah.”

“Why?”

Isolte pressed her lips together.

“Well, um... Everybody’s great. They’re all nice, calm people... It’s just...”

“It’s just?”

“Because they’re all so perfect, their flaws all stand out.”

Isolte began to remember all the people she had met with.

The royal family members introduced by Ariel.

They were all lively young men, and did well to entertain Isolte during the meeting.

But... They were all quite honest.

Just as Ariel said, they began to talk about their own individual fetishes.

The five she had met with, were all quite open about it.

Handsome, kind; After they were married, he would try his best to be of use to Isolte: Atole Orpheus Asura.

Handsome, strong; He has a deep understanding of the Water God Style: Beijil Venti Asura
Handsome, elegant; He's be an extreme help to the finances of the Water God Style: Carlos Siodos Asura.

Handsome, funny; He can make you laugh in any conversation: Daniel Lips Asura.

Handsome, cute; He just makes you want to protect him: Elliot Skiron Asura.

All of them spoke in great detail.

About what they'd do to her on the bed, or places other than the bed, what they'd want her to wear, and finally, what Isolte wanted...

Isolte, who was by no means experienced, couldn't keep up.

When she realised, she declined.

They said upfront what they thought.

She remembered the repulsive lust those handsome men possessed.

In truth, Isolte had quite a bit of mistrust towards men.

Not all men are like that.

They may not all be, but the world is large and there would have to be some that are.

So Isolte began to think that it would be fine if she just didn't get married.

"What was wrong with them?"

"I cannot say. It's something that I refuse to let from my mouth."

"I get it... They are Asuran royalty after all."

The perverted tastes of Asuran royalty are quite famous.

The upper class wouldn't be satisfied with the normality of the common person's desires.

"But this really is a problem. You turned them all down."

"I haven't rejected all of them yet. There are still some left."

"True, but at this rate, nothing's going to get decided."

Tantris said that and reminisced.

Isolte, whenever she had to choose anything for herself, would always end up being too picky, denying everything, and saying she hated it.

And then someone comes along and takes all the good things leaving her with whatever's left.

That's also the reason she missed the usual age for marriage.

"Alright then, let's do this."

Taking her personality into account, he came to a decision.

“Marry the next man you meet with.”

“But, that’s...”

“There’s no way he’ll be able to match all your conditions.

Because you’re in a position to choose, you focus on all the bad points.

But after you’re married those flaws could seem like trivial matters.

There might be some massive benefit that you missed at first.”

Tantris didn’t like this kind of overbearing argument.

He believed that ample time to choose is necessary.

And to know that person from the core.

But it’s because of『Ariel’s introduction』that he believed, even if he had to be somewhat overbearing, he had to make it work somehow.

He couldn’t allow Ariel’s introduction to end in failure.

“...I understand.”

After a short silence, Isolte prepared herself.

It’s true that she was too picky.

She’d always been like that.

That kind of personality has a good affinity with the Water God Style, she would soon be the Water God after all, but it had a bad compatibility with marriage.

If things continued this way, she might spend her whole life single.

Water God is indeed a title to be proud of.

To receive praise and admiration from all.

Responding to everyone with a smile, conversing, and returning home in a good mood.

And then come home to an empty house, eat alone and go to bed with no one by your side.

Empty.

She didn't become the Water God to receive praise.

But besides the swordsman within her, another Isolte exists.

And that existence is already alone.

And because of that, she felt empty.

She didn't know whether or not building a family would fill the hole in her heart.

But it would be better to have someone to come home from being admired to boast to.

It's possible that whoever that might be, after listening to Isolte's day, they might demand some perverse act but...

...No, she was resolved.

"So, when and where is the next meeting?"

"Today. Apparently there'll be a carriage to come pick you up."

"Royalty coming to meet me?"

"Yes."

There were three people left.

Isolte didn't know, but after hearing that five had already been rejected, they had decided to go all out.

As a result of the order being chosen via lottery, each one came at her more serious than the last.

"...Hm?"

It was then that Isolte realised.

"The Dojo is quite noisy."

The Dojo was adjoined to the Cruel house.

That said, it was the headquarters of the Water God Style, so it took up a sizeable portion of land.

Normally you wouldn't be able to hear anything, but Isolte was a Water Emperor.

When the noise was mixed with anger and bloodthirst, she'd have to notice.

"Is he already here?"

"It seems a bit soon for that... No I might just be mistaken, but in any case, I'm going. Even if it is a mistake, it isn't good to keep royalty waiting."

"You're right. Let's hurry."

Isolte and Tantris nodded to each other and walked towards the door.

Part 2

The Dojo was somewhat noisy.

The disciples in their training uniforms were surrounding someone, berating them with insults.

“Aah, Master, there’s someone here to challenge you! He just showed up demanding that our Master come out.”

Isolte and Tantris turned blue the second they heard that.

If the students were acting this way towards royalty, it would be possible for them to have the Dojo shut down.

He probably didn’t give his name.

The man who had come here to pick Isolte up.

“Cease this!”

At Isolte’s cry the place immediately quieted.

“Open the path! He is my guest!”

“...But this man,”

“All students are to kneel in the Dojo!”

After Isolte had shouted that, the disciples scattered like baby spiders, headed towards the Dojo and kneeled in a line.

Ever since the previous generation they’d been quite fast at this.

Well, that aside.

She would have to quickly apologise.

Thinking that, Isolte looked behind where the disciples just were.

“...?”

Waiting there was a man standing at 2 meters tall.

A shoulder width of at least a meter.

With a massive stone like frame.

Isolte recognised it.

“Doga?”

“...Yessir.”

When she called out and he turned around, it was definitely him.

The completely honest member of the Seven Knights of Asura, the『King’s Gatekeeper』Doga.

He had previously been standing there looking frightened, but when he saw Isolte he looked relieved.

“You managed to narrowly escape death. This man is the North Emperor Doga. If he was serious, you people would have...”

Isolte had said that much and then noticed how Doga was dressed.

Knight’s formal wear.

Isolte hadn’t seen him in formal wear before.

He was always wrapped up in his usual gold or grey armour.

And as if it were his uniform, Ariel didn’t say anything.

In addition to his tightly wrapped appearance, he held a bouquet of flowers in his hand.

In Doga's hand it may have looked small, but it was quite a large bouquet.

"What are you doing here? On Her Majesty's orders? Or is an urgent summons?"

Isolte was puzzled.

Doga slowly walked towards her and pressed the bouquet towards her hands.

Isolte didn't think it was possible.

Bouquet and formal wear.

Isolte felt that it wasn't possible.

But what he said next, made the impossible, possible.

"I-Isolte Cruel... I love you! P-Please marry me!"

How was it possible that Doga was a member of the Asura royal family.

She suddenly understood.

He was the only man allowed to guard Ariel's private room.

Luke was a special case and even Sándor, although he was allowed a weapon was assigned to guard some far off room.

Even late at night, he still stands outside Ariel's room.

But considering that, she had never heard that he was a eunuch.

Doga was known to be a harmless man, be he was still a man.

With a large build and strength of a North Emperor.

Considering that, it would be simple for him to take a visit to Ariel's bedroom.

Isolte had always wondered how this man had gotten his position.

But what if he was related to Ariel?

Someone she had known since she was young?

His birthplace was supposedly a small village somewhere in the empire, but there's all kinds of royalty.

Ariel had once fled to a distant country, Doga may have also have hid himself since childhood.

"Isolte."

At Tantris's call, Isolte came out of her sea of thought.

He may have been part of something dangerous.

Doga was most likely part of the darkness of the Asura Empire.

If she carelessly got involved, Isolte might be erased.

"What's the matter?"

Being asked from the front brought her back to reality.

"...Nothing."

Isolte once more looked at Doga.

“Please marry me.”

He said that.

Without a doubt.

He remained silent after that, but she shouldn't have misheard.

Doga's manner was impressive.

Walking in from the front door with flowers in hand and proposing right off the bat.

Isolte would have preferred something slightly more romantic.

But if you think about it, you could call that romantic.

Giving flowers in front of a group of people and proposing was added to Isolte's list of romantic confessions.

Of course, not in front of a smelly Dojo, but a beautiful fountain, at a luxurious party hall...

But she decided to ignore that.

She was ignoring all kinds of things.

“...Perfect timing. A fellow member of the Seven Knights would match you perfectly.”

“Yes... But, it's just...”

It was then that Isolte realised where they were.

In the line of sight of the Disciples.

“In any case, we should change the location. Doga, please follow me.”

“Yessir.”

Isolte began walking in the opposite direction.

She didn't take the flowers from his hands and for a second Doga looked somewhat sad but immediately began to follow Isolte.

Part 3

And so Doga was invited back to Isolte's estate.

He was sitting huddled up on the sofa that was creaking under his weight.

The bouquet was still on his lap.

Opposite him, Isolte was sitting dignified.

She didn't give off any sort of aura nor did her face reveal her emotions.

It gave the illusion that she was feeling nothing at all.

Tantris wasn't around.

He had left them at the entrance to prepare tea.

“ ... ”

And in the meantime, Isolte was carefully observing Doga's face.

In the face of her gaze, Doga put on a serious expression.

Because he was trembling slightly, it was obvious that he was nervous.

But what Isolte was looking at wasn't that, it was his face.

His simplistic face.

She just wasn't fond of it.

She could try to ignore it, but it just wasn't her preference.

"....."

Honestly, she thought that maybe one of the previous 5 might have been better.

They were all similarly high spec'd with handsome faces. They were all much more fantastic.

But the next royal family member to come through might be below Doga.

There was also the previous discussion with her brother.

This was something she had to decide.

"In any case, who would have thought you were royalty."

As Isolte said that with a sigh, Doga looked puzzled.

"I ain't royalty."

"...Hm? Were you adopted?"

She asked that to find out if he was hiding his status as royalty.

"I was born in a small village in the Donati province and have always been a gatekeeper. Me pops was a soldier of the village and..."

But what came out from Doga's mouth was a story of rising up from a decidedly poor soldier.

No, he might not have been poor.

Isolte had already somewhat heard the story but when he got to the part about his sister's wedding, he started crying, which caused Isolte to start crying too.

"And so, after I heard you were gettin' married, I thought, before that, I should let you know how I felt."

"..."

But this basically meant that he was someone completely unrelated.

he had nothing to do with the royalty introduced by Ariel.

And so Isolte decided to refuse him.

It was a slight shame, but she had to uphold the dignity imparted through Ariel's introduction of the suitors.

(Hmm? A shame? why?)

It was then she questioned her own thoughts.

But she immediately reached a conclusion.

He was honest, diligent, and wholehearted.

From what she had heard from him just now, he didn't have any kind of fetish that would make you draw away.

He had the strength of a North Emperor and as a member of the Seven Knights his wage was secure.

He liked to drink but it didn't make him violent, nor did he get involved in showy gatherings.

Only his face was no good.

It wasn't that it was bad, it just didn't fit with Isolte's preferences.

"U-um...!"

Seeing Isolte's complex look Doga spoke up as if resolving himself.

"I-I, ever since I first saw you, I thought you were as pretty as a flower, and, um, I had always loved you!"

Doga said that and once more pushed the bouquet towards Isolte.

"Is that right, from when we first met..."

Isolte's vision was filled with flowers.

Deep blue flowers.

She didn't know their name but they were beautiful flowers.

Being compared to these flowers caused her heart to flutter a little.

"...Yessir."

If Isolte recalled correctly, their first meeting was a battle.

To decide the matter of Ariel's guard, the time when she fought Doga.

To say that it was then that it started.

Thinking back, he had always been somewhat kind to her.

He always had faith in her.

He wouldn't take her weapon when she entered Ariel's room.

Of course, it was also because they were both members of the Seven Knights.

But that wasn't all there was to it.

Thinking like that, Doga's face looked about 20% better to her.

It really wasn't that he looked bad.

Looking at it from a different angle he had a certain charm.

You normally wouldn't see it because of his helmet anyway.

Or so, Isolte thought.

"No, no...!"

Isolte shook her head.

"I'm terribly sorry but it has already been decided that I would marry royalty at Ariel's introduction."

Right, if she was to choose Doga here, it would disgrace Ariel.

Isolte was a knight.

Her loyalty may not be absolute and unwavering, but she had still sworn it to Ariel.

To disgrace the name of her Lord is something she mustn't do.

"You are also her majesty's knight, you wouldn't go against her will, would you?"

“...Yessir.”

Doga looked somewhat troubled.

Just as Isolte said, Doga was also a Knight.

Doga was Loyal.

It was precisely because he was not royalty that he had gained Ariel's faith and been made gatekeeper.

He could not do anything that might betray Ariel's trust.

“...Then if you would please go home.”

“Yessir.”

She had thought that Doga would try to resist, but he easily stood up and turned his back to Isolte.

Quite easily.

He even looked somewhat triumphant.

It was as if he knew he would be rejected from the start and was simply relieved that he had said it.

It was a respectable position to take, but it was also somewhat disappointing.

“...Haa.”

Isolte sighed and looked at the table.

There sat a single flower petal.

Not the bouquet;

He had taken that with him.

“I should have at least taken the flowers from him.”

Isolte muttered that to herself with the petal between her fingers.

Later that day she turned down the royal that came to meet her.

Part 4

The next day.

Isolte was in the training grounds.

One of her duties was to be a sword instructor.

While the soldiers were learning from watching the knights, she was thinking about what happened yesterday.

The royal that had come to meet her, Fraiser Kaikias Asura.

His sexual desire was, as usual, repulsive, but he wasn't a dislikable person.

But compared to Doga, his insincerity was readily apparent.

But instead of refusing him outright, she should have at least told him to wait before she made her decision.

In any case, only two were left.

She would have to screen each of them carefully and choose one

As she was thinking that, a messenger soldier approached her from behind.

“Isolte-dono! Her Majesty has issued an urgent summons for you!”

Isolte could guess what Ariel wanted to talk about.

She had probably heard that Isolte had rejected them one after the other and intended to scold her.

She was resigned to her fate.

Isolte thought that she would have to apologise to Ariel.

“Understood.”

Thinking that, Isolte left the training grounds.

She left behind the knights’ rooms outside the training grounds in a cloud of dust.

Normally one would shower when leaving after training, but as the summons was urgent, something like that wouldn’t be allowed.

And so, she quickly headed towards the King’s chambers.

“Hm?”

As she got close to the inner palace, she felt something was off.

She noticed it was much busier than usual.

Normally one would advance through the empty hallway devoid of both soldiers and knights but today you could see soldiers busily walking about.

Something probably happened.

Isolte was thinking about it but Her Majesty’s summons was the priority.

Without hearing anything in particular, Isolte headed towards the King’s Chambers.

And so, she arrived before the King's Chamber.

In front of the extravagant door, Isolte furrowed her brow.

The person who should have been standing there was missing.

The single man with the stone like frame in his golden armour.

The man who would never move from his post in front of Ariel's room, the Asura Empire's strongest gatekeeper, Doga.

He wasn't anywhere in sight.

As if in his stead, standing in front of the door in formation were the palace knights.

All of whom had weapons strapped to their waists.

It was an imposing sight.

In addition, they all held themselves like experts.

There were also many lower level noble knights that would normally wouldn't be allowed this far into the palace.

They were most likely Sylvester's men.

They did not fear their rear, each taking optimal movement.

"Lord Ifrit!"

It was then she saw the figure of a certain person.

The man in charge of the guard of the castle, the『King's Rampart』Sylvester Ifrit.

"Well if it isn't Isolte. You got here quite fast."

“Just what is going on here?”

Hearing that, Sylvester had quite a difficult face.

As if he was questioning how he should explain it.

Several seconds later, he shrugged his shoulders and said this:

“Her Majesty calls for you.”

As if to say that everything would be explained inside.

Isolte gave up upon hearing that explanation and knocked on the door.

“...Isolte Cruel, reporting in!”

“You may enter.”

Ariel’s voice was the same as always.

Contrary to the bustle outside, her voice was unusually calm.

“Please excuse me.”

Isolte opened the door and entered.

What she saw before her was a strange sight.

Ariel sitting at her desk, performing her duties.

Luke standing beside her, arms crossed, looking worn out.

An Imperial Maid standing grim faced and armed.

And Doga.

Doga who was rarely ever seen in Her Majesty's room was standing there.
In one hand he held his golden helmet and in the other, a slightly withered bouquet.

"Good work Isolte. You arrived rather quickly."

"I was in the training grounds... But just what has happened here?"

To which Ariel replied as if it was nothing:

"Doga has decided to retire as my knight."

"What!?"

Isolte looked at Doga.

He looked serious.

It didn't seem like he was doing this as a joke.

"So what exactly does this mean."

"Well then, I'll have you hear it from Doga himself... Doga if you could explain it one more time."

Ariel said that and looked at Doga.

Doga nodded and began to speak.

"Isolte said that she couldn't marry a knight of Ariel-sama."

"...!"

A single sentence.

With that, Isolte could guess the reason she was called here.

“That’s not it! So as to not shame your Majesty’s name: “A knight of her Majesty, you wouldn’t go against her will” is all I said.”

“Quiet, listen until the end.”

In response to Ariel’s calm voice, Isolte subsided.

But Isolte’s thoughts were not calm.

Depending on the flow of the conversation, she could be accused of instigating revolt in Doga.

No, judging by the clamor outside, it wouldn’t be strange if that was already the case.

Although she didn’t have such intentions...

“Doga.”

Unbeknownst to what Isolte was thinking,

In response to Ariel’s cue, with some difficulty, Doga continued.

“I thought really hard.

About how I promised my dad that I would protect my sister.

Ariel said that protecting the country and protecting my sister were the same thing.

And Ariel-sama is the queen so protecting her is protecting the country.”

“But my sister said that I had protected her plenty already.

There was nothing to think about, this time I would protect what I loved.”

“I like Ariel-sama. I like this country. I want to protect them.

But my feeling for Isotle are much more special.

So I’ll quit as Ariel’s knight.

And after that, I’ll protect Isotle.”

After he said that, he put his golden helmet back on his head, And once more he held the flowers out to Isotle.

“ ...”

Isotle’s eyes were filled with slightly withered deep blue flowers.

The same bouquet from yesterday.

“That’s what he says... What are you going to do Isotle.”

“Huh?”

Isotle was wide eyed at the sudden confession.

“I dont know what kind of conditions you have put out, but he has chosen you over the Seven Knights of Asura.

It’s more than a woman deserves. What will you do?”

Those words.

It seemed she wasn’t called he to be reproached for inciting rebellion in Doga.

And on top of that, she was being asked how she would respond to him.

“B-but, the men that your Majesty had introduced...”

“Forget about that group.”

Alarm bells had begun ringing in her heart.

Far greater than when she faced the Fighting God in the Biheiril Empire.

She felt like she would collapse on the spot.

In actual fact, her face was bright red.

“I... I...”

It was then she remembered the story of the first Water God.

The princess that threw everything away to be with the Water God.

With yesterday’s conversation, she knew that Doga didn’t have much to his name.

His strength, large build, and few family members.

And his position as a member of the Seven Knights.

But he no longer even had that much.

He threw away his position and even his own family to choose Isolte.

With yesterday’s conversation, thinking about it carefully, she was somewhat hasty.

Doga said that Isolte was worth more to him than anything.

He was different from all the other nobles and royals she had met with.

Even after he had thrown away that which he held closest to him, he still didn't demand that she become his.

Just like the princess from the story.

In the whole world, the only person who loved her that much, might just be Doga.

Just what was there to be dissatisfied with.

His face was something she no longer cared about.

“ ... ”

Before she realised, Isolte had taken the flowers.

The large blue bouquet.

The slightly withered flowers seemed as if they were Isolte's symbol.

Even if the flowers wilted Doga was still sure to love them.

In the end, a flower's beauty was but a fleeting thing.

“I may not have much, but I'll be in your care from now on.”

“...Yessir.”

Doga had a bright smile on his face while applause burst out from the surroundings.

Part 5

The proposal in the King's Chambers became well known even among ordinary soldiers.

Doga's former co-workers shed tears of joy, and those who idolised Isolte and wanted to make her theirs shed tears into their pillows.

Doga retired from his position as a member of the Seven Knights and became Isolte's husband.

He was no longer Doga of the Seven Knights, but Doga the house husband.

"You said that you would retire as my knight but Isolte is also a knight of this country.

She is quite strong, but if I were to die, the country would fall into disarray, and she might very well be assassinated.

Of course, you said that you would protect her... Nor do I have any intention of dying.

In any case, how about it? Why don't you protect Isolte while protecting me?"

...But due to Ariel's persuasion it was decided that he would keep his post.

There was no way Ariel would allow the North Emperor Doga to escape from her grasp.

Of course, as punishment for the disturbance he had caused in front of the King's Chamber, he was assigned no small amount of manual labour.

Two members of the Seven Knights of Asura getting married was an excellent outcome for Ariel.

The members of the Royal family that she had called out to were but a trivial matter.

Due to his marriage, the time Doga spent guarding the King's Chambers was greatly decreased.

He would return home at a predetermined time each night, and when Isolte

was sent away on duty, he would certainly follow.

As a result, Isolte's position shifted to an exclusive guard for Ariel but that's another story.

The awkward Doga had been accepted by Isolte.

Until they were married they spent that time getting to know each other as friends, and it wasn't until about a year later that the two were officially married.

During that time, a rumour started that Isolte truly didn't like Doga after all.

Because within the Royal palace, during that time, Isolte's treatment of Doga was just as cold as usual.

But after Isolte accidentally referred to Doga as 'Darling' in front of the soldiers and turned bright red while quickly correcting herself, that rumour soon vanished.

Surely, when the two were alone, they were as close as a couple could be.¹

And so, the two were married.



Translator Notes and References 1. Original said: "As close as Mandarin Ducks"

Let's Make an Automaton!

Chapter 10 — The Day The Doll Walked — First Part

Part 1

It was storming that day.

Rain struck the ground as if trying to wash it away, and enormous bolts of lightning fell towards the earth.

The light from these strikes illuminated the inside of a certain house.

A single house, standing in a barren plain.

In that house, two Mad Scientists laughed.

“Hahaha!! MUWAHAHAHAHAHAH!! FINALLY! IT HAS FINALLY HAPPENED!”
“YES! AFTER ALL THIS TIME! IT’S FINALLY COMPLETE!”

The two Mad Scientists danced around the room hand in hand.

“To have come this far, it’s all due to Shishou’s peerless techniques.”
“No, no. It’s all due to your boundless knowledge and design. Without that we would never have completed it, Zanoba.”

The two were Rudeus and Zanoba.

The two praised each other and stopped dancing.
In the room with the two of them, a dais was set.
It was a stone dais emitting a strange light.
On that dais, a lone girl lay there sleeping completely bare.

“It truly took a long time to make it this far.”

Rudeus thought about all their continuous failures.

The first time they tried to activate it ended in failure.
To complete Prototype Unit No.01 many tens of versions and minor changes were necessary.
As a result, what they got after activation was a golem that could comply with

simple commands.

This in itself was something which would be in great demand, but what the two strived for was something much different.

For Prototype Unit No.02 an Artificially Intelligent core and a body closer to a human's were to be developed.

Of course, the failures continued.

The body gradually became more human-like, but to make its movements more human, changing the flesh was very difficult but but tampering with the core to the same end could cause it to fail to activate.

To make it as human as possible they had to achieve the perfect balance.

Failures led to more failures.

They re-examined the memoirs of the Eccentric Dragon King Chaos many times over.

They even asked the Armoured Dragon King Pergius for advice and gained insights into magic formations and spirit summoning.

The Dragon God Orsted gave them rare magic stones and knowledge of many materials.

But despite that, the failures continued.

The unreachable domain of the Mad Dragon King. They shed tears at the thought of never touching it.

They failed, shed tears, tried once more, and failed once again.

But each time they failed, they learned something new, slowly making progress.

And finally, one month later.

At last, they had succeeded.

They had succeeded in activating a doll of temporary composition.

The Prototype Unit No.03.

It had no face but without a doubt, it activated.

They were overjoyed at the success.

After taking the Data from the Prototype Unit No.03 they immediately began work on the next unit.

The Prototype Unit No.04

The Prototype Unit No.04 had specs quite close to the finished product.

The body and face of a human, lips that moved when it talked and it made full

use of its limbs to move freely.

But in actual fact, the two of them hadn't completed all the experiments on the Prototype Unit No.03.

They hadn't examined for all possible flaws.

In their pursuit of their ideal doll and perfect form, they did not have the patience.

And so, they brushed the process aside and began work on the almost complete Prototype Unit No.04.

But that in itself was a good thing.

Everything Prototype Unit No.03 could do Prototype Unit No.04 could too.

They still had to perform the system check on the Prototype Unit No.04 and test its compatibility with the tasks that they would have the finished product undergo.

That was fine, they thought.

This is the next step, they thought.

What we want to see it beyond this, they thought.

This is the Automaton that we want to see, they thought.

"Now then! I'm activating it~!"

"Yeah!"

Zanoba reached out to the magic stone on the girl's modest chest with an excited expression.

Within that magic stone, in the chest of the girl was the core.

The tiny complicated magic formation in the Core was the girl's heart.

After the Core activates, the Doll would stand on its own feet, learn, make its own decisions, and absorb mana with its own power allowing for semi-permanent activity.

It's was perfect autonomous doll.

Of course if that happens it's possible that it could collapse from mana exhaustion.

But if that happens it would just need to be rested on the platform until all its magic recovered.

But when Rudeus first proposed that, Zanoba had said:

“If it needs a human to restart it, doesn’t that make it incomplete?”

But Rudeus replied to him:

“Of course not, that in itself is perfection.

When people fall and can’t get up by themselves, it’s by borrowing the hands of others that they can stand once more.”

“ ...”

Zanoba’s hand began to hesitate.

Would even he hesitate at having to touch the chest of a small girl?

No, he wasn’t someone to have doubts over something like that.

“...Shishou why don’t you do it?”

“No, the reason we made it this far was your hard work, you do it.”

Zanoba was frightened.

They were about to realise their ideal.

The thing they had been dreaming about for more than 10 years.

But he wasn’t originally a timid man.

He was someone unrelated to indecision.

“I understand... Then, I will activate it!”

“Yeah!”

Zanoba’s hand slowly reached towards the girl’s chest.

Slowly and carefully as if touching something fragile his hand crept along the girl’s skin towards the magic stone.

The mana needed for activation wasn’t that large.

It was an amount anyone could provide.

“...『Awaken, my beloved daughter』”

The moment Zanoba said the activation incantation, his mana was sucked through his finger.

The red light on the platform began to turn blue.

the second he confirmed that, he removed his hand.

“ ...”

Several seconds passed in silence.

The two men held their breath and watched the girl activate.

The post activation process was automatic.

After the chant and input of the initial mana, all that was left to do was watch.

“ ... ”

The girl, silently opened her eyes.

She had dark black pupils.

And at the same time, the physical connection to the platform was severed.

After the connection was severed, the girl slowly sat up.

She had pure white hair.

She was so slender, you would think she didn't have the slightest trace of muscle.

Her breasts were small but the shape was perfect and her figure was so beautiful you wouldn't think it belonged to a young girl.

This was the crystallisation of Zanoba and Rudeus's many years of experience in doll creation and art.

Her body was made of artificial flesh and her bones were of the same strength as the Magic Armour.

The artificial flesh used Rudeus's earth magic clay as a base, mixed with the scales of Red Dragons and Phantom Butterflies that have high magic power and finally, the sap of an Elder Treant and Immortal Race blood.

This was the compound that was completed after continuous trial and error with high class materials. While possessing exceptional durability, it also had a feel extremely close to human skin.

What made the body move were magic formations carved into the bones.

These formations cause the artificial flesh to solidify and move like muscle.

The principle was the same as the Magic Armour.

But the joints were made from the powdered bone of Skeleton Deathbreakers.

The bone powder raised the magical conductivity.

Especially high rank skeletons have exceptional conductivity allowing extremely human-like movements.

The girl raised her hands stretched above her head and stretched backwards. Her expression was human and her movements smooth.

Her overly calm actions that emphasised her chest were brimming with feminine charm.

Gulp

Rudeus swallowed.

“I didn’t notice it when we were making it, but those movements are much more dangerous than I realised.”

“...”

Zanoba didn’t respond.

But you could see on his face that he felt the same.

The girl, still silent, lay back down and raised her knees.

Her young buttocks came up with her knees and she then began to extend them and with her feet still in the air she began to open and close her thighs.¹ The secret place of the doll was exposed in front of the two.

Coincidentally, these movements were not to flaunt her body in an erotic sense.

Upon activation a self check program of joint movement would be initiated. If the check ended in failure, it would give an error message. From her own mouth.

“Activation successful.”

Finally, after removing her hair from in front of her face, she proclaimed that it was complete.

The artificial voice was very similar to someone the two knew.

“Haa...”

The two, releasing their tense expressions, breathed a sigh of relief.

They had failed countless times at this step.

Like the time when she raised her arms and her hands flew towards the ceiling like a rocket punch, or when her hip bent at a weird angle, or when her crotch split and it looked like some odd work of art, or when both hands started spinning...

And among the Prototype unit No.03 some simply exploded.

The problem was that the skeleton was the same as the magic armour. When he had first boarded the Magic Armour, Rudeus had to learn to control its strength.

But that required a large amount of experience in both magic and bodily control.

But a doll has no experience. And in that case, if it was always using maximum strength it would destroy itself. Therefore it was necessary to install all kinds of limiters.

But it was still made to the same standard as the Magic armour. Even with a limiter, the threshold is still high and movement on the level of a Saint Class swordsman is possible.

“It seems like there’s no problems.”
“Yeah.”

As if reacting to their conversation, still lying down, the doll looked at Zanoba with its glassy, inorganic eyes. And then it spoke.

“Master, what is your name?”
“It’s Zanoba!”
“Master Zanoba registered. What are your orders?”
“Please register this man as Sub-Master.”
“Understood. What is your name?”
“It’s Rudeus.”
“Sub-Master Rudeus registered. What are your orders?”

This exchange was something they had repeated countless times with the Prototype Unit No.03. To first register the Master.

“Well then, if you would please get up off the table and stand on the floor.”
The doll got off the table and quickly stood up. Seeing this, Rudeus clenched his fists.

“Alright, it can properly register Master’s names and follow commands.”

Rudeus was extremely excited looking at the doll.
The first time around, they had experienced major issues.
When he had said “It’s Zanoba” the doll had registered “Master It’s Zanoba”
Or another time when it didn’t move at all not understanding that “If you would please” was the beginning of a command.

They had gotten advice from Pergius to deal with it.
The hint that they had gotten led to all kinds of changes to the magic formation and they had restarted from square one a number of times.
And that’s how they had ended up here.
The completed summoning magic formation that was carved into the Core contained all human instinctual responses.

“Jump up and down lightly.”
“Yes Master.”

The doll began jumping up and down with both feet.
Quite a powerful jump.
The artificial flesh had enough power to destroy the skeleton but it seemed like the proper amount of control was in place.

“Keep jumping and raise both hands above your head.”
“Yes Master.”
“Spread your feet apart and... Stop.”
“Yes Master.”
“Now start jumping again while spinning both hands around.”
“Yes Master.”
“Now each time you jump, alternate between opening and closing your legs.”
“Yes Master.”

The doll moves exactly as Zanoba says.
Her hair bounced around her swinging arms.
The balance was also perfect.

“Now make a funny face.”

The doll stopped for a second at Zanoba’s abrupt command.

“Yes Master.”

She hit her cheeks with her hands and her face warped.
From expressionless to odd.
You might not be able to call it funny.
But the doll thought for itself and reached a conclusion.
In other words, exactly what they wanted.

“Hmm, it seems promising.”
“Yeah...”

But Rudeus was frowning.
What he was looking at was her small chest that would occasionally shake and her exquisitely designed nether regions.

I say this for the sake of Rudeus’s honour, but it was not a sexual gaze.
It was something he made himself after all.
But each time it got more complete, he was afraid.
Was it his own talent?
No.

“But it really is similar... The face, and while it might have been an accident, the voice too.”

Then Rudeus looked at the doll’s face.
The doll looked Rudeus in the eye but it didn’t smile.
They had made it to be able to smile, but it probably wouldn’t without an order.
But that wasn’t Rudeus’s problem.

“This is definitely going to make her mad...”

The doll’s face resembled someone they knew.

“You mean Nanahoshi?”

Yes, Nanahoshi Shizuka.
Their otherworlder friend sleeping in the sky castle.
The doll resembled her.
Her face, her different length black hair, her figure, and height all resembled Nanahoshi.

A naked doll that resembled their friend.
With sensual breasts and functioning genitals.

“Idiot, I’m talking about Sylphy!”

Right, what he feared was his wife’s anger.

“You could tell her that you needed someone to take over for Nanahoshidono while she sleeps?”

“Maybe.”

Right, they had a reason.

In the case that they find Nanahoshi’s friend that was transferred with her. Although they could simply tell him her name, it would be better to hear it from someone who resembled Nanahoshi.

They had that reason so they made the doll to resemble Nanahoshi.

“The women of your house should also be aware.”

“They know we’re making an automaton but they don’t know that it looks like Nanahoshi.”

That said, Rudeus didn’t think that making a doll that looked like Nanahoshi would make his wives mad.

They had a proper reason and Nanahoshi herself was also fine with it.

If he explained it properly they’d probably accept it.

“The problem is the chest and crotch.”

But explaining the fact that a doll of his friend functioned sexually was a different problem.

Thinking that his wives might find out, Rudeus was anxious.

Based on the way he explained it his bed could end up very cold.

Sylphy would end up looking offended and say “Since you went to all the trouble to make it, why don’t you just sleep with the doll instead?”, or she might just burst into tears and get depressed.

Either way, it wasn’t a good thing for Rudeus.

“It wasn’t necessary to make it this elaborate.”

“You can’t say that, with Shishou’s masterful techniques you have crafted a magnificent shape. Especially the nipples, they’re quite erotic.”

“Idiot, after I purposely went out of my way to be vague don’t go saying nipple.”

“I apologise.”

Why had they made the chest and crotch so elaborate.
True, when they were designing the project, they had an ideal.
The ideal of a Dutch wife.²

But at this point they had separated from that ideal.
They should have held themselves back.
It wasn't necessary to make the chest and crotch 18+. It didn't need nipples to make tea..

In the first place, this was merely the Prototype Unit No.04.
There was no reason to make the prototype look like Nanahoshi.
Rudeus got ahead of himself.

"In any case, let's keep this a secret from Sylphy and the others.
"Shishou is whipped after all."
"Please at least call me devoted."

Currently there weren't many who knew that the doll looked like Nanahoshi.
Orsted, Pergius, and Nanahoshi herself.

Of course, they planned on unveiling it after completion and informing various people.
They had plans to mass-produce them after all.
But if those people involved knew how detailed they had made it, they would probably give them a cold stare.
Roxy might just look at him softly and ask "That doll has a better figure than me doesn't it?", or maybe just draw away from him with a melancholic look.
Having Roxy draw away from him would leave Rudeus with no other option besides Seppuku.

"Hmm, I can't think that your wives would be as upset as you believe.
Everyone is quite aware of how energetic you are."
"If we were making a normal one I'd think so too, but it's just because it looks like Nanahoshi I can't help but feel trouble coming."

Rudeus, while nodding to himself, poked the doll's chest.
It was a slightly different sensation to that of a human but it was still extremely soft.
If he hadn't made it himself, he would get quite excited.

That excitement might be considered cheating.

If Eris found Rudeus cheating she would probably give a “Hmph” with her mouth in the shape of a ^ and after removing the fist she lodged in his nether regions, push him down and climb on.

To make sure he would never cheat again, she would completely make Rudeus her's.

Although, this wouldn't necessarily be something Rudeus would hate.

“...”

Incidentally, the doll had carefully watched the finger that poked it, but hadn't given any other reaction.

It was simply the sensation of being touched.

They hadn't inputted the sensation of sexual pleasure.

If Elinalise or Ariel had been more deeply involved in the production process, it might have turned out that way, but the two were currently engrossed in child rearing.

“Well then, shall we scrap it now?”

As he said that, his face darkened.

To Zanoba, scrapping a doll was not something enjoyable.

No matter the doll.

“...No! This one in itself is complete to a certain degree. Scrapping it would be a waste.”

Rudeus folded his arms and began to think.

Worst case scenario, they would scrap this one and begin work on the next model.

Exchanging just the crotch and chest would be impossible with their current technology,

They would need to think about it for the mass production model, but currently it was a unique item.

“We need to think about what to do in case someone finds out...”

“Nobody will know. Isn't that why we're doing our research all the way out here.”

“Yeah, I guess.”

They were currently in the Fittoa region of the Asura Empire.
They had borrowed a section of land in the Fittoa restoration zone from the Boreas house and built a research lab.
There weren't many who knew its location

"It doesn't matter to you. If we get found out, no one's going to get very mad at you."

"No, I told you about it before, but recently, Julie has been getting angry at me."

"Ahh, right, that's true."

Even Julie who was supposedly working on the project with them didn't know about the lab.

She had helped out with the artificial flesh and the skeleton but she didn't know how they were being used.

She was cut off.

That is to say, lately, whenever Zanoba brings back any kind of erotic doll, Julie would get obviously displeased.

Although she wouldn't go as far as to destroy them, there were times when she would move them out of sight.

There was no helping it.

Although she had long since grown up, age wise she was at that time...
Adolescence.

The two knew that a growing girl had a rather fragile spirit.

"But isn't it possible that Julie could find the transfer magic formation in the basement."

The magic formation leading to the lab was in the basement of Zanoba's workshop.

If Julie were to go into the basement, stumble on the magic circle and decide to activate it out of curiosity...

She would witness the naked automaton girl.

It would probably be rather shocking.

"I made sure to lock the door from behind and I have the only key."

"Julie could easily get past that. I taught her how to open locks with earth magic

after all.”

“No, Julie wouldn’t open a door I locked myself. She has promised that.”

“Good.”

Julie and Zanoba were still master and servant after all.
Julie understood that there was a line she shouldn’t cross.

“Let’s get back on track. What should we do about this?”

Rudeus again began to fold his arms and think.
Thinking about it, besides the nipples and crotch, the rest was all fine.
And besides, this was the Prototype Unit No.04. If they were to dispose of it,
taking all its data wouldn’t take too long.

“Alright, although it’s a waste, let’s take the data from it and scrap it.”

Rudeus reached a conclusion.
Ruseus had decided to go through it but Zanoba was still hesitant.
It had taken quite a large amount of time and money to make and they still
hadn’t completed the experiments that they had to do on the Prototype Unit
No.03
Destroying it just because the nipples were erotic was too much of a waste.

It was then, a light bulb suddenly popped above Zanoba’s head.

“Wait, Shihou!”
“What?”
“We can just put clothes on it!”
“Hm? Hah! Right! We can just do that!”

At Zanoba’s suggestion, Rudeus also realised.
As long as no one can see it, there’s no problem.
With clothes on, the erotic parts would be hidden.
As long as they weren’t a rapist, no one would suddenly tear off it’s clothes.
Meaning that as long as they didn’t tell anyone it would be fine.

“Alright, wait here a minute.”

Rudeus said that and rushed into the next room.
There were the clothes he had prepared in advance.
A thick beige dress, the kind you wouldn’t see often in the Magic City Sharia.

And also a bra and panties.

Or course, brand new.

They had originally planned to clothe the doll.

The two had completely forgotten about it and simply trembled at the frightening seductive power of the naked girl.

“Alright, put on these clothes.”

“Yes Master.”

“After that, lie back down on the platform.”

“Yes Master.”

After the doll put on the clothes Rudeus gave it, it went and lay back down on the dias.

For the time being, now that it had clothes on, the dangerous sexual aura had disappeared.

It was now simply a girl who looked like Nanahoshi lying still.

There was no immorality at all.

Although the fact that it didn't blink was somewhat unnerving...

But like this, it seemed like all their problems had been solved.

“I'm kind of tired now. It's a bit early but let's leave it at this for tonight.”

“Sure.”

After deciding what to do next, Rudeus sat down.

They didn't end up conducting extensive experiments but the outcome looked good.

There was no need to rush, they could teach it all kinds of things tomorrow.

Rudeus clapped his hands together and stood up.

“Tonight we celebrate! Our plan has taken a great step forward.”

“Of course! Since I thought you would say that, I had planned something in advance. Over here!”

Zanoba picked up a barrel that was sitting in the corner of the room.

After carrying it to the middle of the room he broke the top open with his fist. It gave off a large bang and a little spilled out.

“Well aren't you well prepared!”

Zanoba grabbed cups he had also put together and scooped some out from the barrel.

The cup was filled a translucent violet liquid.

It was the wine of the Asura Empire.

“Oh, do we have anything to eat?”

“All we have is preserved stuff.”

“That’ll do.”

After collecting a mountain food from the cellar, the two began filling their cups.

They raised their cups into the air in a toast.

“To the advancement of the doll project!”

“To our dream!”

“Cheers!”

And the merrymaking began.

Part 2

“But still, what should we teach it?”

“Since we’ve already confirmed that it can complete simple tasks, we should see just how adaptable it is and test the extent of its independent thought.”

“There’s a whole heap of things to look into. Let’s just get through whatever we can.”

The two were discussing their future plans while drinking.

After it had successfully activated they didn’t make it do anything considerable.

But it did manage to skillfully interpret a vague order

She had the fundamental knowledge of the earlier models and would continue learning by herself.

But they still didn’t know just how far it’s intellect would stretch.

Like the extent of what it could learn or things it couldn’t do.

Or how far it could think for itself and make it’s own decisions.

“Leave it to me. I’ll take responsibility and teach it all kinds of things.”

“Don’t go teaching it anything you shouldn’t.”

“I would return those words right back at you.”

“That’s rich coming from you.”

“Hahahahaha.”

The two were drinking merrily and thinking about what to do next. But then Zanoba changed the conversation topic.

“Right, the『byproducts』that you made have been selling well too.”

“We did end up making all kinds of other things in the middle of research. Have you been selling them at the store?”

“The frog bag is particularly popular.”

“Oh really...”

To get the proper consistency of human skin, Rudeus tried all different kinds of combinations.

Among them was the cheek pouch of the Rain Force Frog. It was extremely long and thin but also very durable.

He had originally thought to use that to make the skin.

In the end they decided to look for something different to use and made something else from it.

That was...

“The contraceptive(Condom)³ is it.”

“Luke-dono is especially pleased with it. He created a factory to produce them in Asura.”

“Asuran nobles really do like that kind of thing...”

“Although you say that, you use it too don’t you?”

“Well yeah.”

Yes, Rudeus used them too.

Almost every night.

After his third and fourth daughters Lily and Christina were born there was a silent agreement that the next child to be born would be Sylphy’s.

Sylphy became the centre, so the nights he spent with Eris and Roxy decreased. But because the Elves weren’t very fertile, she wasn’t able to conceive a third time.

The fact that Sieg and Lucy were able to be born might simply have been good timing or maybe god was bullying them...

They didn't know, but when their turns began to decrease Eris and Roxy got restless.

Compared to before, Eris's desire had settled down but she was still quite lascivious.

The gleam in her eyes was like a wild beast.

But if Rudeus would accompany her, she might end up pregnant.

And that's where the condom comes in.

If it was used, the wild Eris could be satisfied and there would be no child.

Seeing Eris who was currently bearing her third child, Sylphy didn't look upset, nor was the atmosphere of the house strained.

It was somewhat of a godsend.

"...Well, you know, it's not too good for the amount of children to increase if the number of people to look after them doesn't as well."

"You could just employ a maid."

"If I hired a maid, she wouldn't look after me too. Six people is just too many."

"Hahaha... That's just like you Shishou."

Zanoba laughed.

Seeing that Rudeus suddenly thought of something.

The question everyone was always thinking of asking.

"Right, what do you think of Julie?"

"In what way?"

"Like, as a second wife?"

"With Julie?"

"Well there is her age, and her status is quite low... But you don't consider yourself royalty anymore right? It's not a bad idea right? Being surrounded by kids, praising them, sometimes having to scold them."

Zanoba listened and then firmly shook his head.

"I won't get married to her."

"...Right."

Hearing his firm reply Rudeus decided to let it go.

Everybody had a line that couldn't be crossed.

It didn't seem like he was saying that simply because he didn't want to marry her.

There were plenty of reasons like his status as royalty, the fact that he was already married or the younger brother that he had killed, or Pax.

"It's nothing major. Would you like to hear it?"

"If you're willing to tell."

"I'm a Miko and in exchange for my super human strength, my skin doesn't have much feeling."

"Meaning?"

"The inside of a woman is too soft, there is not enough stimulation."

Hearing that Rudeus was shocked.

It was a juicy story.

But he also understood.

Like the reason why Zanoba would use bronze for statues whenever he could.

"Of course, that's not the only reason.

There's also other things like Pax and Julius.

But the fact that it would cause my partner pain to be able to produce children is the main reason."

"I see... But still, if the opportunity comes, you should ask Julie about it. It's fine if you don't have kids... There's also the option of adoption after all."

Rudeus was so vague because he already had six children himself.

"Haha, I guess you're right."

Hearing Zanoba's feeble laugh Rudeus decided that he should stay away from marriage and changed the topic.

Now was the time to celebrate.

They should be happily drinking.

"Let's leave the rubber aside! What about the others? Are they selling?"

"The others are doing alright. They're being treated like oddities, some of them have made it into eccentric's collections."

"I thought they were pretty convenient... Aisha was super happy about the vacuum cleaner."

Rudeus's byproducts were quite diverse.
Using magic formations to make all kinds of things like a fan or vacuum, waterproofing or a fridge.
Rudeus's inventions were quite convenient but not many were widespread. Mostly because although the magic wasn't too hard to reproduce, the materials involved inflated the cost.
It's possible that further research could lower the prices but that was in a different direction to their goal.

"They are convenient, but Asura and Millis both have magic tools to the same effect, so simply hiring a servant to operate them is easier."
"I was thinking more about decreasing the servants work though"

Rudeus took a swig and sighed.
Even though Rudeus had lived happily here for years he still couldn't forget the sensations of his past life.

"Well as long as the technology remains, it's always possible that one day, someone else will put it to use so let's at least leave behind how we made it."
"Yeah, that sounds good. I'm sure that some time in the future, someone will succeed your will Shishou. They might think you've written some kind of phantom scripture."

"I will name it 'The Rudeus Anthology'"

"Haha, future magicians would never even dream that the grimoire written by the man called the Right Hand of the Dragon God would contain household appliances."

The two were conversing and drinking happily.
Their faces slowly got red.
A whole barrel was a bit much for the two of them.

"It's a shame that Cliff and Lord Badi aren't here."
"...Cliff-dono definitely wouldn't approve of such an immoral doll."
"Let's call him after the next step. We could even have the toast at Cliff's house in Millis."
"Let us do that! Ohh, of course! After we put the finishing touches on this prototype, let us present the Automaton Model No.01 to Cliff-dono."
"That sounds great! Ah, but if we do that, the girl type would be a bad idea..."

let's make it a boy."

"A boy would also be a good thing."

"Oh, has this sparked his Majesty Zanoba's curiosity?"

"I have no interest in homosexuality, I simply understand the merits of a doll in the shape of a young boy. Do you not Shihou?"

"I get it. Even if Sylphy was a boy, I'd still get it."

"Hahaha, that's just like you Shishou!"

As their celebration began to liven up, the two also got quite drunk on their everlasting liquor.

And because the two old friends were engrossed in their drinks and research....

"Alright, the next one will be a boy model. Let's try our best to make a young boy good looking enough to make cliff jealous."

"Haha, Ahahahah!"

...The two didn't notice.

That their festivities were being closely watched.

And that the contents of their merry conversation was being listened to.

That person was sneering in laughter.

Part 3

"Uugh... My head hurts."

The next day.

Rudeus began to detox the pain in his head and got up.

Looking outside the window, the storm had blown over and a cloudless sky opened up before him.

"It's already noon... I must have drank too much."

But, for some reason, drinking together as men was too good.
Celebratory drinks especially.

Yesterday they were bewildered at the dolls shamelessness, but that was another thing.

Now that the Prototype was complete, the next step would be the fun part.

The dream before them. Their overflowing hope. Their bursting love.

Thinking those kinds of things, Rudeus looked towards the doll's face and...

"...Wha?"

It wasn't there.

The doll wasn't on the dais.

All he could see was an empty platform.

"Wait a second, huh? What? Umm, Zanoba~? What'd you do with the doll~?"

Zanoba had probably woken up before him and gone to teach it.

Thinking that, he began to look around.

He then saw wrapped in a blanket in the corner of the room, Zanoba just waking up.

"Hmm~... Shishou, the doll is still suspended on the dais isn't it."

"Suspended?"

Rudeus suddenly remembered.

After they had put clothes on it they had definitely put it to sleep on the dais. There was no doubt that they had put it asleep.

".....Did we suspend it?"

But to properly suspend it, it was necessary to give it the order to shut down. You had to place your hand on the magic stone and recite the chant. They hadn't done that.

"S-Search!"

"U-Understood!"

The two began to search for the doll in a panic.

But they couldn't find it anywhere.

Not in the lab or anywhere else.

The doll had disappeared.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1.This line made me feel weird translating it.

2. This is a term for hyper-realistic sex dolls, but with the context it's used in here 'sex doll' isn't an appropriate term. See [This](#) for details. Original term: ダッチワイフ

3. Kanji says contraceptive but is read "Condom"

Chapter 11 — The Day The Doll Walked — Second Part

Part 1

That day, Elinalise was out shopping.

Hand in hand with her son Clive.

Elinalise had already birthed and raised many children but holding hands and going out with her own child was still fun.

Especially with Clive who looked so similar to his father.

His hair and his lips both resembled Cliff.

And although she had no basis, the way he thought himself the best was exactly like him too.

Remembering how Cliff had looked when they had first met, Elinalise began to drool... *Ahem* smile happily.

“Okaa-san, pumpkin! Buy the pumpkin! The pumpkin!”

“Hmm, you’re right. Pumpkin is quite delicious this season...”

“Not like that! If you eat pumpkin you know, you grow taller!”

“Who taught you that?”

“Lucy-chan!”

Elinalise’s son Clive was a pretty boy.

Especially his eyes and features were quite like Elinalise, there was no doubt that he’d be popular with both human and elf girls in the future.

But unfortunately he got his stature from his father and was quite short.

Clive had quite a complex about it and at home he would talk about how he wanted to get taller all the time.

“I wonder why you want to get taller so much?”

“It’s a secret!”

Clive’s face got a little red as he said that.

But Elinalise already knew the reason.

It was Lucy.

Clive was in love with Lucy who was two years his senior.

He wanted to get taller so that Lucy would think he was cool.

“Hmm?”

It was then that Elinalise’s long ears picked up a familiar voice.

(Oioi, Isn’t it common sense when you get something from someone to give something back huh?)

(I wanna know what kinda voice you’ll make for us girly.)

The voice was coming from a back alley behind a bar.
Looking into it, you could see a girl being held by two men.
They were someone Elinalise recognised.
And for a change, this time it was the girl that she knew.

“By voice do you mean like this?”

“You’d think so right? But people can make a much better sound you know?”
“Come on, come to the inn with us and let’s have a listen? It’s cool right? Let’s go.”

The woman didn’t seem like she was completely against it.
But as far as Elinalise knew, she wasn’t that fond of this kind of invitation.
What she wasn’t showing on her face is that she was troubled.

“Hey, cut it out.”

Elinalise, shopping bag still in hand called out to them.
The men immediately turned to look.

“Huh? What’s your problem?”
“That girl is a friend of Rudeus. Go find someone else to hit on.”

The two men turned their lustful eyes towards Elinalise.

“By someone else... Missie, how about you?”
“Eeh, to say that in front of my little brother? How dirty.”
“Your brother? You flatter yourself.”

Elinalise had an embarrassed smile and a hand on her face.
From their joking attitude she could already tell they were outsiders.
Most likely traveling adventures.
If they were from around here, there’s no way they would still be here after

hearing Rudeus's name.

"Who are you... Hmm?"

In front of her appeared Clive red in the face.

With a tree branch he had picked up in hand.

"Don't touch my mother!"

"Clive, I appreciate the thought, but your mother can handle people of this level no problem. Get back."

"Waaa..."

Elinalise lifted Clive up and placed him behind her back.

Elinalise reminded herself to praise Clive later and drew her sword.

"This level? Even though the two of us are A rank?"

"Hmm... Impressive at that age, you two must have some amount of talent."

"Haha, you sure are composed. You must have some confidence in your skills."

"No, unfortunately I'm simply mediocre."

The two men drew their swords.

They looked very familiar with them.

Elinalise carried her sword around for self defence, but unfortunately she didn't have her shield.

Considering the opponent's strength, 2 vs 1 was not in her favour.

"Rest assured, after I teach you a lesson, I'll show you a good time."

Elinalise returned her sword to its sheath.

The two had looked somewhat scared before, but now they were looking towards Elinalise with lustful eyes.

After seeing the two separate from the girl, Elinalise took a deep breath.

"KYAAAAAA! HELP!! KIDNAPPERS!!! AAAHH!"

A scream echoed through the alley.

The loud noise startled the two.

"Wha!"

"W-we aren't kidnappers...!"

But Elinalise's voice continued ring out.

Once Elinalise could see that no one was coming from the empty path, the back alley fell silent.

“...Heh, trying to give us a fright. There’s no way anybody would be coming. We’re behind a bar in the middle of the day.”

“I’ll let you scream as much as you like on the bed...”

But then.

Doors all around began to open one after the other.

And out came men.

Groups of wild men, all in jet black coats.

On their backs was a yellow crest that somewhat resembled a tiger.

They were the Rudo Mercenary corp.

As part of their work, they helped carry in the alcohol that the bars planned to sell that night.

“Elinalise Anego!”¹

“Who the hell do you bastards think you’re laying your hands on!”

“You assholes pickin’ a fight with the Rudo Mercenaries!?”

“You wanna go! We’ll take you!”

Those normally courteous young men who would protect the peace, when dealing with outlaws or those that hurt others, would become quite ill mannered.

And on top of that, there were more than 10 people heading towards them.

If it was Rudeus he would have apologised the second he saw them trying to intimidate him.

No, Rudeus would probably have apologised the second he saw the doors open.

“.....W-We apologise!”

“We were ignorant of your greatness... We have only arrived today.”

It took longer than two seconds for the men to throw away their swords and apologise.

Congratulations, Rudeus’s honour has been upheld.

Rudeus isn’t a coward or a chicken after all.

Yes, if a large number of wild men come out of a building, anyone would

apologise.

“Anego, what should we do?”

“They haven’t done anything yet, so let’s let them off with a warning. Take them somewhere nearby and teach them a lesson.”

“Yes ma’am! Alright then, you lot, come over here!”

“No, but we... um...”

“I said get over here!”

“Umm, I have somewhere I have to be...”

“You can afford to miss it!”

After confirming that the adventurers had been dragged into the bar, Elinalise walked up to the girl.

“Nanahoshi, it’s been a while... Was it already the day you were supposed to wake?”

The girl was Nanahoshi.

The expressionless girl nodded.

“I awoke last night.”

“Is that so... Well talking here would be dull. Let’s hurry on.”

Elinalise said that and took Nanahoshi’s hand.

It was then she felt something was off.

“Oh, Nanahoshi, when did you cut your hair?”

As far as Elinalise could remember, Nanahoshi had long hair.

But now it was cut to around the nape of her neck.

Elinalise was puzzled.

The girl called Nanahoshi pursed her lips and smiled.

It was a somewhat distorted smile.

It was a troubled smile, as if hiding something hard to say, or perhaps plotting something...

Seeing that, Elinalise, with her wealth of experience, guessed something.

“There seems to be some reason... If you’re fine with me, I wouldn’t mind listening. Are you free?”

“I currently have no important tasks.”

“Well then, how about we head to that cafe?”

Elinalise took the hand of a slightly sullen Clive and picked up her shopping.

“Clive? Oh, what are you so annoyed about? What? Are you sad you couldn’t protect your mother? Go tell that to the girl you like, not your mother...

Nanahoshi, what do you want to do? Are you coming along?”

And as told, Nanahoshi followed her to the Cafe.

Part 2

“In any case, that was rather dangerous. I’m glad it was behind that bar so that help could come quickly.”

A few minutes ago, the two had entered the cafe.

They had ordered the same fruit juice.

Nanahoshi had imitated Elinalise’s order.

Incidentally, in front of Clive was a somewhat fancy dessert.

Lately sugar had been appearing rather cheap on the market so people had been using it to make preserved fruits.

It seemed to be Nanahoshi’s first time in the cafe as she was looking rather curiously.

“So, what happened?”

“There have been numerous occurrences, it is difficult to choose a single one. Please refine the question.”

“...Did you always talk like that?”

Elinalise was puzzled, but she knew that going through hard times could often change the way people speak.

If a person changes so does their outlook.

“Then please tell me everything from the beginning.”

“From the beginning?”

“Yes, from the very start.”

Nanahoshi blinked twice and began talking.

“I awoke on the dais. When I awoke Zanoba-sama and Rudeus-sama came up

to me.”

“Oh, intruding on a lady’s room, what am I to do with those two.”

“The two of them, seeing me without clothes, looked exceedingly happy.”

“Huh...?”

“After that the two of them touched my limbs and exposed chest, proceeding to check every corner of my body. After that they began to argue whether or not they would use me. After they were satisfied with me, they came to the conclusion to dispose of me and proceeded to put me to sleep on the dais and then proceeded to sleep themselves.”

Elinalise’s thoughts stopped for a moment.

The image she had in her head was of Rudeus and Zanoba stripping a sleeping Nanahoshi with vulgar looks on their faces, waking her up and forcing themselves onto her.

Having seen those kinds of men plenty of times, Elinalise could imagine it quite easily.

“A-and you didn’t resist?”

“Resistance was meaningless.”

“True, they are Rudeus and Zanoba... Was Pergius-sama not present?”

“It was only the two of them.”

Elinalise didn’t know much about Pergius’s personality.

But she did know that Pergius wasn’t in his castle all the time.

“W-was this the first time?”

“Yes. But Rudeus-sama and Zanoba-sama had planned this for some time, it seemed like they had preparations in place”

“Are you saying it’s possible they have been aiming for you since way back?”

For them it would be simple to know when Pergius would be out.

And be extension, when such a day would line up with when Nanahoshi would awake.

“ ... ”

Elinalise was a calm woman.

She was a woman who, due to her vast experiences, had the composure to remain calm in a situation such as this.

But to her, being betrayed by those she trusted was quite shaking.

But how could Rudeus...

Putting aside the unpopular Zanoba,

Rudeus was surrounded by his children and wives who both loved him and he loved back.

The man who put his life on the line and fought Orsted for the sake of his family.

Rudeus who does all kinds of things with Sylphy and Roxy at night.

Rudeus who had Eris do all kinds of things to him at night.

How could he... To Nanahoshi...

She who was frantically searching for a way to return to her homeland.

There was a part of her that thought that it was impossible.

That it was some kind of mistake.

Rudeus had been sincerely helping her.

Much to Sylphy's jealousy he continued to help Nanahoshi.

He went to the Magic Continent and fought the Demon Lord Atofe to save her.

But just looking at Nanahoshi's expression.

Removing the uneasy smile from before, she was constantly completely expressionless, like a doll.

She neither smiled nor cried

Even her hair was now short. Only barely up to her shoulders.

The hair that she had looked after so carefully.

It was now somewhat dried.

Elinalise wasn't especially close to Nanahoshi.

But she had still known her for quite some time.

And over that time she had gotten to know what kind of expressions she made.

She had never seen Nanahoshi so shocked before.

Nanahoshi couldn't possibly be making it up.

She couldn't tell what was the truth.

It could be a trap by someone to try and take down Rudeus or Zanoba.

Right.

There were all kinds of magic tools to change one's appearance.

That said, to use it, one would have to infiltrate deep into the Sky Castle. It

would be impossible to imitate Nanahoshi.

The only people capable of that would be those who knew Perguis's schedule to some extent and could determine when the Sky Castle would be mostly empty. There weren't many people who fit that.

She was confused.

She was flustered to an extent that she had never felt in these last few years. What should she do. What was the truth. She knew only one thing.

"It must have been hard."

Elinalise stood up and moved next to Nanahoshi and embraced her tightly. What she knew was that the girl in front of her carried a scar on her heart.

"Elinalise-sama, the conversation isn't..."

"It's fine, I've heard enough.

You had to talk about something difficult.

I don't quite believe it but... Mmm.

Betraying someone's trust is unforgivable. I will properly punish Rudeus."

Therefore Elinalise put off finding the truth for now and decided to comfort Nanahoshi.

"Has Rudeus committed some kind of crime?"

"Yes, a terribly hateful crime."

"What would that be."

"He hurt you. No, not just you. Depending on how they feel, he could have also hurt his wives... Sylphy, Roxy, and Eris."

"I am uninjured."

"No, they have hurt your heart."

"Heart..."

Elinalise suddenly felt something odd while holding Nanahoshi.

She somehow knew something was off around her heart.

Elinalise often held people in her arms so she could tell.

She had never felt someone chest that felt like this.

There was no tangible sense of discomfort, but there was almost something inhuman about it.

“Found it!”

A loud voice rang out in the previously quiet cafe.

Looking at the entrance, you could see a man in a grey coloured robe pointing towards Elinalise’s group.

It was Rudeus.

Following behind him was Zanoba.

It wasn’t just the two of them, they were also with some of the Rudo Mercenaries.

“Catch it!”

Hearing Rudeus’s shout, Elinalise strengthened her hold on the girl and right before she was about to shout back at him to wait a minute...

The person within her arms moved.

The girl shook off Elinalise’s arms with strength she didn’t think possible, and with unbelievable speed she flipped the table and jumped towards an open window.

Nanahoshi’s figure had disappeared.

With tremendous speed.

Speed on the level of a Saint Class Swordsman.

Nobody present could follow.

The Rudo Mercenaries were also taken aback.

“Boss, Zanoba-sama... It’s too fast. We can’t keep up with that.”

“It’s true. That’s the automaton that Shishou created. The average swordsman can’t compare to it in speed or power.”

“Don’t go praising it now... For the time being, it doesn’t seem like it’s capable of acting in secret yet, let’s spread out and search. As long as we know where it is, Zanoba and I will do something about it.”

Rudeus issued instructions with tired look and walked up to Elinalise.

He stroked the head of the bewildered Clive who was still clutching his fork and confirmed that he was unharmed.

He walked towards Elinalise and extended a hand.

“I’m sorry about that Elinalise. Are you alright? Did it do anything to you?”

”...No, I’m fine.”

Elinalise gripped his hand and stood up.

“So just what happened?”

“Well there isn’t much to tell...”

After witnessing what just happened, Elinalise felt relieved.

She was misunderstanding something after all.

Part 3

Eris’s job in the house was taking Leo and the children on walks.

Of course, she would also teach the children swordsmanship, she also had a class at the school.

But when it came to『Household Jobs』Eris only had walks.

As long as there was nothing pressing, they would head out early afternoon. Of course, taking everyone out would be dangerous so she at most took 2~3 people.

When Leo would go out for a walk, Lara would get on his back as if it was natural so she would really only be taking one or two people.

Today, Lara and Sieg were riding on Leo’s back and the still young Lilly was on Eris’s shoulders.

And so, walking around the town and letting the children play somewhere suitable was Eris’s daily routine.

Just a little while ago it was only Lucy, Lara, Ars, and sometimes Clive. Back then Lara would often have her hair pulled by the boys of the neighbourhood until Lucy would stop them.

But lately because of Eris’s training, Lara has been able to fight back.

When Eris had turned away for a second Lara was standing with a cut on her face and a bleeding nose.

Nearby were the boys she had fought with crouching down and crying.

Lara and Eris’s eyes met and still expressionless she thrust out her fingers in a V declaring her triumph.

When Eris saw that she was somewhat troubled.

When she was younger she often got into fights was scolded for it. A nobleman's daughter shouldn't be getting into fights, if someone says something to you, you return it with words, or so they'd say to her. She wondered if she should scold Lara.

But she ended up praising her.

Lara didn't speak very much.

That shy girl standing up for herself was something to be proud of.

"Good job", "As expected of my daughter", was the kind of thing she said.

Of course, if Sieg or one the others had made someone obviously weaker than them cry, she would get mad.

She'd spank them until their behind was red.

But those boys were older and bigger than Lara.

And so Eris thought to herself that complementing her was right after all.

Thinking that Lara would be going to school next year, giving her nothing but praise might not be so good, but Eris didn't think that far ahead.

That said, today they weren't at the usual park, they were heading somewhere different.

There probably wouldn't be any fighting.

There wasn't any meaning to it, just a whim.

"Don't go too far from the bank!"

Today they had come to the river to play.

Lara and Sieg had taken off their clothes and jumped in with Leo.

Eris was watching Lilly.

Lately she had begun to toddle around.

Maybe because the river excited her, she walked up to it nervously and put her hand in and shrieked at the cold and ran into Eris's arms; she had already repeated it a number of times.

"Kyaa! Mama! Mama!"

"What is it? Is the water scary?"

"Cold!"

Hearing her half-baked answer, Eris let a smile slip and pet Lilly's head.

Lilly and Lara looked quite alike but Lara was somewhat more docile. But Lilly was much more investigative than Lara. Whenever she found something, she would be exceedingly curious. Just then, it looked like Lilly found something.

“Mama! Sparkles!”
“...Sparkles?”
“It’s sparkling!”

Looking where she was pointing, beyond the shining surface of the river, something else was sparkling.

A fish.

A small fish about the size of a finger was swimming around.

“It’s a fish.”²
“Annoying!”
“Not annoying. A fish. Try saying it. Fi-sh.”
“FISH! Mama, come on, catch it! Catch the fish!”
“Yes yes... Let me see it.”

Eris rolled up her sleeves and looked in the river. After a few seconds there was a splash. And suddenly the fish was in Eris’s hand. The fish had no idea what happened and simply moved it’s mouth bewildered.

“Here.”
“Yay! Yay!”

Eris gave the fish to Lilly. The fish then seems to realise the danger it was in and suddenly began to flop around.

It jumped off Lilly’s hand and fell back in the river.

“It got away...”
“Huhu, it thinks it can... Hm?”

But in the middle of their exchange Eris sensed a presence.

“...Something’s coming.”

Something was heading towards them from the city.

Quite fast.

It would have to be Rudeus wearing the magic armour『MK.2 revised』or something of the same level.

“Leo. Go get the two of them! Have them put their clothes on too.”

Hearing Eris’s shout, Leo barked and began to push Lara back up the bank. Lara was unaffected.

She probably already knew what was going on from talking to Leo.

Sieg grumbled that he still wanted to play but Lara grabbed his hand and they climbed out of the river and began to dry themselves.

“Lara, help Sieg put his clothes on!”

Sieg had only recently been able to put on his own clothes. Doing up a single button was quite slow and without help, he’d take quite a while.

Eris was somewhat impatient. She didn’t feel any hostility from whatever was approaching but it was a bit too fast to grab the children and run.

Even if it was an enemy, she could probably win, but it would be better to have the children run. The three children would run on Leo’s back and she would confront the enemy. Orsted’s office was also close by. The place where both The North God Kalman III and The Dragon God Orsted were staying. There was no doubt that they would be safe there but...

“...Huh, what?”

But seeing what was approaching, Eris let out a confused sound. Because it was a face she knew.

A girl with black hair.
Nanahoshi.

“If it isn’t Nanahoshi.”

Nanahoshi was about to keep running right through but hearing her name,

she suddenly stopped.

“Good morning. I apologise but may I inquire as to what your name is?”

“It’s Eris. What, did you forget?”

“Eris-sama. I have committed it to memory.”

Eris felt something was off.

Her hair was short, she was extremely fast, and her speech was different.

But Eris hadn’t known Nanahoshi a particularly long time, she probably just thought that this kind of thing happens sometimes.

Well, Eris never was someone to worry about the small things.

“What’s up, you’re running real fast, are you chasing someone.”

“Yes... No, correction. I am running away.”

Nanahoshi looked behind her and answered as such.

Behind her was an empty plain.

“Mama! Mama! Amazing!”

Seeing Nanahoshi’s speed, Lilly walked up to her.

She was poking Nanahoshi’s leg with a sparkle in her eye.

“Kyaa!”

Nanahoshi lifted her up from under her arms and Lilly let out a happy cry and laughed.

“Good morning.”

“Haha!”

Lilly was grabbing Nanahoshi’s hair and rubbing her face.

Eris didn’t know why Lilly and Nanahoshi were so close but thinking that Lilly was being somewhat rude, she took Lilly from Nanahoshi and put her on her shoulders.

“Yaa~. Mama, can I have it?”

“No. That’s rude.”

Lilly sounded disappointed but Eris didn’t put her down.

Seeing that, Nanahoshi grabbed a bunch of her hair.

“Do you want this?”

”...Yeah.”

Seeing Lilly’s restrained nod, Nanahoshi tore off a few strands and handed them to Lilly.

“Here.”

“Yaay!”

Lilly took it and her face lit up again.

Eris didn’t know why Lilly was so happy... But for now she reasoned that black hair was quite uncommon.

“Eris-sama, may I ask a question?”

Nanahoshi then looked at Eris and asked that.

“What is it?”

“Eris-sama is Rudeus-sama’s wife ‘Eris-sama’ correct?”

“That’s right.”

Being called his wife, Eris puffed up her chest in pride and answered. Hearing it from someone else, she was definitely proud. Having given birth to the eldest son, and looking after the children like she was, she was most definitely confident that she was his wife.

“Eris-sama, would you knowing of my existence cause you to be angry at Rudeus-sama?”

“Existence...? I wouldn’t get mad just from you being around.”

Although she didn’t know the reasoning behind the question, Eris still answered.

Nanahoshi was Rudeus’s friend. She wouldn’t get mad from them talking. If he laid his hands on her, or asked to make her his fourth wife, she’d probably be a little mad though...

“Then what about Sylphy-sama or Roxy-sama?”

“I don’t think they’d get that mad... Oh but maybe...”

Eris remembered something Sylphy once said.

“Sylphy once said that she just couldn’t agree to Nanahoshi being around.”

“Agree you say? What kind of agreement would that be?”

“I don’t know. But that girl truly does love Rudeus so it probably has something to do with her feelings.”

Eris had no hesitation in saying that she loved Rudeus but even she had to concede to Sylphy’s dedication.

Sylphy would end her own life if it was for Rudeus’s sake.

Of course, Eris was also prepared to die fighting to protect Rudeus.

But that was something she wanted to do.

With the things that she absolutely didn’t want to do, she probably wouldn’t be able to hold out.

Even if it was for Rudeus.

But Sylphy would. She would hold out for Rudeus.

Eris had to yield to that part of Sylphy.

“Understood. I would like to talk to Sylphy-sama. Do you know where she might be?”

“She should be at home today.”

“Very well. I thank you for answering my questions.”

Nanahoshi’s mouth warped into a smile as she bowed and she turned around and began walking towards the town.

“I wonder what all that was about.”

Eris folded her arms, put her feet shoulder width apart and let out a ‘hmp’ from her nose.

It was the pose that Ars had often been imitating.

“...Mama.”

Eris turned around and saw blue and green hair peeking out of Leo’s back. It was Lara and Sieg.

Thinking back, even though someone they knew came along, the two hadn’t said hello.

That was something rare.

Normally Leo would take the initiative to walk up to people and they would greet them, but this time Leo had remained in the back the whole time.

But right when Eris thought that, Lara answered her question.

“...That person wasn’t Nanahoshi.”

Hearing that, Eris remembered her unease and her face stiffened. On her shoulders, the hair that came from Nanahoshi that Lilly was holding suddenly stiffened and straightened out.

“.....”

She didn’t know the cause of her unease but she knew she should hurry home.

But then she remembered the children and changed her thoughts.

“We’re heading to the office now. You two get on Leo.”

For now, she’d take the children somewhere safe and then head home. She helped the kids onto Leo’s back and began towards the office.

Part 4

When Eris arrived at the office the atmosphere was quite heavy. She also recognised the large number of Rudo Mercenaries gathering outside. And it wasn’t just them, Zanoba and Julie, Elinalise and Clive, and the North God Kalman III Alexander were all there too.

But the normal unpleasant aura was gone. It seemed that Orsted was out.

“Eris! Why are you here!?”

And then, Rudeus walked out from the group. Eris was relieved upon seeing him. And at the same time, confirmed that her unease from before wasn’t imagined.

“I ran into someone strange on our walk.”

Hearing Eris’s answer, a danger could be seen in Rudeus’s eyes.

“What kind of person?”

“They looked like Nanahoshi.”

Rudeus immediately looked like he wanted to ask something. Like were they were or what happened.

But more so, was concern for the person in front of him.

“I see... So, did they do anything to you? Nobody was injured right?”
“The children are fine.”

Rudeus looked worriedly at the kids.
Lara, Sieg, and Lilly, playing with her hair.

“What about you? You’re not hurt or anything?”

After confirming that the children were unhurt, Rudeus began to confirm that Eris didn’t have any wounds.

Searching her from head to toe, touching her face, turning her around by the shoulders, and right about the time Rudeus’s hands reached her breasts a fist landed in his chin.

“I’m fine! Can you not understand that much by looking!”
“Hyii...”

“She didn’t do anything to us, but since Leo realised that she was a fake, we decided to retreat to here.”

Eris said that and looked at Leo.
And for some reason Lara looked especially proud.
Eris pat her on the head and turned back to look at Rudeus.

“So, just what was that?”
“Umm...”

Rudeus began a detailed explanation.
That the Automaton that he and Zanoba made ran away.
And how by the footprints around the teleport magic formations they had concluded that it was in the Magic City Sharia.
After that the two had followed it through the formation, woke up Julie who was lazing around in the workshop and enlisted the help of the Rudo Mercenary corp to search.
Using the incident with Elinalise as a starting point they had found it once but lost it again.
They had received reports of sightings over town and so after using his clairvoyance eye from the city walls, they confirmed that it was heading towards the office.

Concluding that its goal was the office they went ahead.
And while observing the direction the doll was coming from with the clairvoyance eye, Eris had arrived.

“She didn’t seem all that bad though.”
“For now yes. But if we don’t find it quickly, we don’t know what will happen...”

Rudeus’s tone was resolute.

Rudeus believed that the doll had a flaw.
In the Automaton’s core were certain Directives.
Ensure Human Safety, Obey Commands, Self-Preservation.
In other words, the three laws of robotics.

But the doll had disobeyed orders and ran.
Which meant that there was, at the least, a flaw with the『Obey Commands』Directive.
For now, its interactions with Eris and Elinalise only ended with a conversation.
There hadn’t yet been any casualties but thinking that it was because of the『Ensure Human Safety』Directive would be wishful thinking.
If the『Ensure Human Safety』Directive wasn’t in effect, there was no telling if it would suddenly start a massacre.

“Eris, could you tell me in detail what you talked about with it?”
“In detail? It was mostly just small talk... If I remember right—”

Eris tried to remember the conversation she had with the doll.
But the more she talked the stiffer his face got.

His and Zanoba’s conversation, Elinalise’s conversation and Eris’s conversation.
Putting those together, he came up with a hypothesis of the doll’s actions.

When talking with Elinalise, it had constantly asked questions about his wives.
Last night, Rudeus had said that they would dispose of it because it would make his wives mad.
The doll had heard that.

The『Obey Commands』Directive didn’t seem to be functioning
But if the『Self-Preservation』Directive was in place it wouldn’t be abnormal for

it to take defensive manoeuvres.

But what would count as self-preservation?

In other words, to dispose whatever was threatening its existence.

What was threatening it?

That would be Rudeus's wives.

It didn't attack the sleeping Zanoba and Rudeus most likely because they were registered as Masters.

It may be contradictory but with a bug in it, contradictory actions wouldn't be odd.

Therefore the doll began to look into who his wives were.

And thought that it should erase them.

That said, all it did was talk to Eris, who should have been a target.

Which would disprove the theory.

No, maybe not.

Looking at the contents of its conversation with Eris, it seemed to be investigating which of his wives needed to be eliminated.

In other words, which one was the biggest threat to its existence.

It probably planned to eliminate the biggest obstacle.

And its conversation with Eris made the biggest obstacle perfectly clear.

"And after hearing where Sylphy was it headed back towards the city."

Hearing that, his face went completely white.

"Sylphy's in danger!"

Rudeus began running towards the house, but immediately turned around and headed back to the office.

Once he was back in the office, he took a deep breath.

Once he had calmed down and caught his breath, he look at the surroundings.

The Rudo mercenaries, Zanoba, Julie, Alek, Elinalise and Clive, and his own children.

Rudeus first turned to the bored looking Alek and lowered his head.

"Alek, I'll be leaving the children and Julie here. Can I leave them to you?"

"Yes, of course."

First, ensure the safety of the children.

If Orsted was here, he would have had Alek do something else but it couldn't be helped since he was out.

For the time being, since Alek was protecting them, they would be fine.

Julie was against being left behind, and since the doll walked past her while she was sleeping it would probably be fine, but it was decided that she would stay back on standby.

"Eris and Elinalise, I'd like you to head towards to school.

There's a chance that it might go for Roxy.

There's already a group of the Rudo Mercenaries stationed at the school so meet up with them."

"Got it."

"Understood."

There was already a search group at the school lead by Rinia.

The doll said it was heading towards Sylphy but they still didn't know what it was going to do.

It was better to have backup on the chance something did happen.

"Half of the mercenaries are to head to Aisha and give a detailed report.

Let her know that on the chance that things go south to request assistance from Pergius-sama."

"Yessir!"

If they could borrow Pergius's power, they could probably capture the doll in an instant.

Rudeus didn't think it would get this serious, so not only had he yet to contact his house, he regretted the fact that he had delayed telling everyone else.

Although it wasn't certain they would need to rely on him yet.

"The other half of the mercenaries are to head back to Zanoba's workshop.

"Understood."

The doll had been moving all around but it's possible that it was all a diversion and it's real goal was to escape from Rudeus.

It could head back to the Asura Empire the way it came and simply run away.

There was a part of him that thought it would be fine to let the dangerous

existence leave them... but it was something he had created himself. He had to take responsibility and deal with it until the end.

“Zanoba, you’ll come with me to the house and ensure Sylphy’s safety.”

“Roger that.”

“Alright, everyone, begin operation!”

On Rudeus’s command, everyone scattered.

Part 5

The people left in the office were the children, Leo, Julie, and Alek.

“Now then, until your father returns, you can play with onii-san over here.”

Almost the instant their parents disappeared,
The smiling Alek began to talk to worried looking children.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1. Elder Sister/Boss Lady
2. “It’s a fish”=Sakanada | “Annoying”=Sakanade. It’s a pun. They sound similar.

Chapter 12 — The Day The Doll Walked — Final Part

Part 1

At that time, Sylphy was at home looking after the 4th daughter Christina.

“That’s good Chris,¹ now take you hands off and walk towards mama.”

“Hmh~! Mama you come here...!”

Compared to the fast learner Lily, Chris could only barely walk while holding onto something.

And so recently she had been undergoing training like this with her mothers. Although Chris had never really liked it and was shaking her head on the brink of tears.

“No you come over here, come on, do it slowly, slowly.”

“Hm! Uuh... Mama~... Come...”

“No. Come on, I’m right over here.”

Chris was grumbling and crying.

That said, it wasn’t something she couldn’t do.

She just like to be spoilt.

“*hic*... aah!”

She eventually shut her eyes, toddled over to Sylphy and jumped into her arms.

“There, there. You did great. Good girl.”

“Nn~...”

Sylphy held Chris as she always did and stroked her head.

Chris, still sniffing, held onto Sylphy.

Compared to the energetic and curious Lilly, Chris was quite timid and withdrawn.

She belonged to the indoor faction and never went out much.

Eris occasionally took her out with the others, but she would always be stuck to her and she would often start crying and come right home because she was

scared.

Therefore she wouldn't go out on walks and spent most of her time home.

"Chris, you're too shy. I wonder where you get that from..."

Slyphy said that, but, well, it definitely came from Rudeus.

"Mama... Papa, not home yet?"

"No, he's not home just yet."

Chris is what you would call a daddy's girl.

Ever since she was born she was always quick to cry but whenever she was in Rudeus's arms she would always stop.

She was the complete opposite of Ars.

Lately, Rudeus's lap has been her reserved seat.

"Aah!"

"...Hmm?"

She had heard a sound from the entrance.

Someone had probably come home.

"Papa?"

"I wonder... I don't think it is."

Rudeus had left yesterday.

He hadn't given an exact time, but he said he'd be 2~3 days.

So he shouldn't be back yet.

"Onee-chan?"

"It's a bit too soon to be Onee-chan."

It wasn't quite time for Lucy and Roxy to be back from school, or for Aisha to finish with the Mercenaries.

It could be Eris back from her walk.

No, She was out with the playful Sieg, so she'd probably be out a bit longer.

Then Lillia and Ars back from shopping.

No, the two of them just left. It would be too fast.

It's possible that they could be coming back because they forgot something...

It could be Zenith.

She was sleeping in her room, but she could have made her way into the garden without anyone seeing.

Sylphy kept thinking all kinds of things and put Chris on the couch.

“Chris, wait here.”

Sylphy, somewhat baffled, headed towards the entrance.

After she left the living room and was halfway down the hallway, she heard a creak.

The door was half open.

But what Sylphy was looking at wasn't the door.

“...”

She was standing inside.

Sillouetted by the setting sun of the half open door, she stood there.

A black haired girl.

Just by appearance, she was the girl called Nanahoshi.

If they were closer, she might have called out to her.

But the moment Sylphy saw her, she frowned.

“...You're not Nanahoshi are you?”

Hearing that, the girl's lips warped into a smile.

With the lighting behind her, the look gave an ominous vibe.

“Yes. That is correct. How did you come to know?”

“Nanahoshi comes to our house quite often. Whenever she opens the door she has habit. She'll always knock twice and if there's no response, she'll open the door slightly and ask “Is anyone home?”² quietly.”

Sylphy said that and put mana into her right hand.

An unknown existence imitating their friend had infiltrated her house.

For Sylphy, who had decided to protect their house, it was a matter of course.

For now, she couldn't feel any animosity from the girl in front of her.

Her voice didn't contain any emotion, but the way she spoke was polite.

But Sylphy wasn't naive enough to assume she was an ally.

“Who are you? If you're one of Hitogami's underlings, I'll be the one to take

you on.”

Saying that, gears began to turn in Sylphy’s head. She would blind the girl in front of her and grab Chris from the living room and Zenith from the second floor and run. They had long since prepared for the possibility that someone would invade their house, but could she herself carry it out. There hadn’t been any sounds of battle, but Beet, coiled around the gate had probably already begun. She had used her ring to signal Eris and Roxy, but would they notice? Would Orsted and Alek in the office be able to grasp the situation.

She had to run.
Or at least stall for time.

Thinking all kinds of things, she glared at the opponent in front of her.

“I currently do not have a name.”
”...?”

“Would it be possible for me to hear your name?”
“Sylphyette Greyrat.”

Being suddenly asked, Sylphy reflexively responded.
“Then that would make you Rudeus-sama’s wife, Sylphy-sama correct?”
“That’s... right.”

It had confirmed her name.
She had reflexively responded, thinking that it might have been better not to answer, Sylphy continued to remain vigilant.
It didn’t look like she had a weapon.
She looked full of openings.
But Sylphy couldn’t let her guard down. There were plenty of people that could overwhelm others empty handed.

“Would my presence cause Rudeus-sama to incur your anger?”
”...?”
“Sylphy-sama, why can you not agree to me?”
“I don’t understand, what are you talking about...”

I was distracted. I shouldn't listen to her.
This could be some kind of illusion.
Sylphy thought that for an instant she took a wary step back.

"That is dangerous."

That instant, the girl shouted and reached out.
Her speed outclassed Sylphy.
The opponent was clearly faster than her, but Sylphy expected that.
She couldn't see it, but she could react.
The second her footing was stable, she would dodge to the side and counter by striking her with her magic.
The instant Sylphy decided that...

"Aah!"

She realised that Chris was by her feet.

When?

Right, when had Chris managed to toddle to the entrance.
She hadn't listened when Sylphy had told her to "wait here"
And by some twist of fate, she was right where Sylphy was about to step.

Once she realised, it was too late.
She had to somehow avoid stepping Chris.
But her balance was broken.
She wasn't certain she could get out of the way on her unstable footing.

And reflected in Sylphy's eye was a girl's hand that shot forward with incredible speed.

Part 2

When Rudeus arrived, the house was eerily calm.

Beet's post.
Aisha's garden.
Leo's dog house.
No one was there.

Peeking through the unlocked entrance, he could see the cleanly swept hallway and living room door.

It was calm.

No, it wasn't that there was no sound.

Only a cry resounded throughout the house.

It was a voice he knew well.

It was Chris's cry.

It was a cry of heartbreak.

It sounded like something important had been lost, as if alluding to some great sadness.

To Rudeus, it was a familiar cry.

A cry that whenever he approached, would quickly stop.

And although he heard it, for some reason, he still thought it was calm.

"...The mercenaries are to remain on standby."

Rudeus issued that order, opened the door as silently as possible and went inside.

Here, it was also calm.

The hall was clean.

He could see his own pale face reflected in the mirror set in the entranceway.

By, what was it?

What was the smell irritating his nose?

It was by no means a pleasant smell.

It was the kind of smell, that if locked up with, would make you want to vomit.

It was the kind of smell that would gather flies.

And as if invited by that smell, Rudeus walked down the hallway.

His destination was the living room.

It was where the sound was coming from, and he was confident that was where the smell was coming from too.

He looked at the tightly closed living room door.

Rudeus resolved himself and opened it.

An unbelievable scene opened up before him.

What first entered his eyes was the top of the table.
Chris was laying down crying.

And leaning over Chris was the black haired doll.

The doll's hand was dirtied.
A light brown like dried blood covered it.

That brown had lost its moisture and was giving off a strong smell.
It was a choking smell.
That smell couldn't possibly be...

"Oh, come on, you got poop on your hand didn't you."
"It's not a problem. This level of filth will not hinder movement."
"No, you have to properly wipe it off, see. After that, you wrap the diaper up like this and put it in the basket to wash later."
"After getting dirty, immediately proceed to wash, correct? It has been committed to memory."

Sylphy wiped the doll's hands clean.
The substance covering the doll's hands and the smell in the hallway.

It was Chris's poop.

Chris was sleeping on the table but when her diaper was taken off, she began to cry.

"Papa! It's Papa!"

But as soon as she saw Rudeus, she stopped crying and smiled as sweet as a flower.

"...Hmm?"

Rudeus had a certain amount of expectations.
Sylphy fighting.
His wounded family... Or possibly his collapsed unmoving family.
But the sight of the doll clumsily changing a diaper was entirely outside of his predictions.

"Aah, welcome home Rudy"
"Sylphy, it looks like... you're fine..."

“Of course. There’s no way I wouldn’t be.”

Sylphy nodded and the doll behind her stood up.
Expressionless.

It’s inhuman face was ominous enough that it seemed as if it would stab a dagger through Sylphy’s chest any second.

But the doll saw Rudeus’s gaze and took a small step behind Sylphy.
Almost as if it was using Sylphy as a shield.

But Rudeus saw something different.

It was as if the doll was afraid of being seen though by Rudeus.

“Sylphy, do you think you could step away from the doll?”
“...Why?”

Sylphy took a stance to protect the doll.

“That doll is something Zanoba and I made but it went berserk.
It probably overheard our conversation and went to eliminate you thinking it could take your place.”

Rudeus realised halfway through his explanation that something was wrong.

“But it seems that we were somewhat mistaken.”

That said, the fact that they didn’t know doll’s goal hadn’t changed.
Rudeus didn’t unfasten his guard and glared at the doll.

“Hmm, that’s a bit different from the story I heard.”
“What have you heard?”

Seeing Rudeus confused, Sylphy smiled.

“Yeah. It’s not all that short so you should sit down.”
“Yeah...”

As he was told, Rudeus went and sat down cross-legged.
Sylphy let out a “Hmm?” and tilted her head to the side.

“Rudy. Isn’t the way you’re sitting wrong?”
“Eh!? Aah, yes.”

Rudeus knew what Sylphy’s tone meant and changed his posture.

What he could feel from her tone of voice was anger.

Which meant that Rudeus had no pose besides Seiza.

“Ok then, go ahead.”

Seeing that he had complied, Sylphy turned around and walked behind the doll.

She pushed the doll towards Rudeus and it stared at him expressionlessly.

“Master Rudeus, are you going to dispose of me?”

“Yes, we are.”

Hearing Rudeus’s immediate reply, the doll didn’t stir one bit.

But Rudeus knew.

With its skeletal frame of the same composition as the Magic Armour and its specially created artificial flesh, it had the combat power of a Saint Class swordsman.

If such a dangerous existence would no longer listen, there was no other option than to destroy it.

Wearing the Magic Armour and using his Magic Eye, he wouldn’t fall behind. That said, he couldn’t let down his guard.

“.....I do not wish to be disposed of.”

Rudeus suddenly realised.

“ ... ”

The doll was frightened.

It appeared to simply be standing there.

Its face, expressionless.

It’s tone, unwavering.

But he knew it was frightened.

The doll moved its gaze towards Sylphy.

Its inhuman eyes somehow seemed to be asking Sylphy for help.

“It seems Rudy doesn’t understand, you’ll have to explain it to him from the start.”

Sylphy said that and the doll once more looked at Rudeus and Zanoba who

entered the house before anyone realised.

And it began to talk.

“Rudeus-sama and Zanoba-sama had said:

That by being here, Rudeus-sama’s wives would get mad.

Elinalise-sama said that Rudeus’s wives are Sylphy-sama, Eris-sama and Roxy-sama.

Eris-sama said that she had once heard that Sylphy-sama could not accept Nanahoshi.

Elinalise-sama referred to me as Nanahoshi.

I thought, it had to be my resemblance to Nanahoshi that would be the cause for my disposal.

But I am not Nanahoshi.

Which would mean that there must be some way to prevent it.”

Her voice was monotone, but the desperation could be felt.

The doll was searching for a solution to its impending death.

“I do not wish to be disposed of.

Rudeus-sama and Zanoba-sama were both joyful at my creation.

I wish to be of use to the two of you.

Being disposed of, is not something I wish to happen.”

When using Summoning Magic, on occasion, the summoned being could be too powerful and cause harm to the caster.

But they fundamentally cannot harm the caster.

A summoned Magic Beast is loyal to its master.

Causing harm to the caster can only be a result of actions taken for the sake of the caster.

The doll also contained this principle.

Pergius’s Summoning Magic was used as the basis after all.

There’s no way it wouldn’t be there.

That said, Pergius’s spirits possess self-awareness.

From the moment they are summoned they move with a sense of self.

For the sake of their master.

Using their long lives to be of use for even longer.

“Therefore, given the information that I obtained, I decided I would question Sylphy-sama whom I deduced to be challenging my existence.”

She had never broken the three laws of robotics.
Her nature as a summoned spirit has simply taken precedence.

“So I asked her, “What should I do to have you consent to me””

The doll had suddenly appeared and barged into the house.
It had Sylphy far more wary than usual.

But the doll had never possessed hostility.
As opposed to Sylphy who had nothing but animosity, it simply gave a terrible smile and wanted to talk.
And when it saw that Sylphy was about to fall over and land on Chris, it saved her and was worried if they were hurt.
When it noticed that Chris had had an accident in her pants from fear of being stepped on, it offered to change her diaper.

She had come to plea to Sylphy.
“I do not wish to die, I will fix any problem you might have with me, I wish to be of use, so please don’t kill me, please”

Those words struck Sylphy’s heart.

“Rudy, I won’t get mad.
I already knew you wanted to create something like this.
It’s a lot more, human, than I imagined...
But she’s a good girl, even if she’s got some kind of flaw, I’d like to put her to use.”

Sylphy’s words ended the doll’s explanation.
Now they could only wait for Rudeus’s decision.
Rudeus’s mouth was in the shape of an ^, his arms were crossed and his head was down.
His shoulders were trembling.

“Uuu.”

Zanoba who was standing behind him also began to tremble.
Just as Sylphy was about to ask what was going on,

“Waaaaaah!”

Zanoba let out a cry and ran towards the girl.

“To think that you had thought about it like that!

To think that it was all for our sake!

I am sorry for saying you had gone berserk! It was my mistake!”

Zanoba, crying a waterfall of tears, hugged the doll.

Seeing the two of them like that, Rudeus let out a little snuffle.

His eyes were also moist.

Rudeus took his handkerchief out of his top pocket and blew his nose. He stood up and took the doll’s hand.

“It’s just like Zanoba said. Hearing that you’re going to be disposed right to your face, of course you’d run.

You’d try to look for a way out...

I understand. Since Sylphy isn’t going to get mad, Zanoba and I are going to properly finish you and properly put you to work.”

“And I shall no longer fear Julie’s indignation!”

The two were clinging to the doll crying.

Sylphy could see that the doll was somewhat surprised.

Confused that although the problem wasn’t resolved, it was being forgiven.

Well in any case, it had been settled.

Sylphy was filled with pleasant feelings and pat Chris, who was feeling lonely being ignored by Rudeus, on the head.

But then she thought about something.

“Rudy, I just have one last question. Why did you think I would get mad?”

Rudeus began to quiver when he heard that.

He turned around and once more knelt down.

Cough

He began his explanation.

“Actually, the doll, down there, is quite elaborately——“

Sylphy got mad.

In any case, that was the end of this series of events.
Whether Rudeus got to sleep with his wives that night was another matter.

Part 3

As a result of this incident, the doll's disposal was dismissed.
Their plan became to maintain the doll to the best of their abilities.

And the doll that played the central role in the incident, was assigned a legitimate unit number.

Automaton No.01.

After that, Rudeus continues his experiments in the Lab and the Magic City Sharia and advanced many of his various plans.

But that's another story.

Nanahoshi also became aware of the doll's secret.

Discovering that a doll with her face functioned sexually, she was clearly displeased.

But after Rudeus prostrated himself and told her that he had already promised Sylphy that he wouldn't use it to that end, she somewhat forgave him.

"Well, it's fine. So, what's her name?"

"We haven't come up with one yet."

"Really? Do you want me to give it one then?"

And so Nanahoshi named the doll.

The Automaton No.01 would be known as『Anne』.

And in case Nanahoshi's acquaintance were to ever appear, in order for him to be able to know of her existence, the doll would be given a Japanese-like name and so,『Nanahoshi Hajime』³ was chosen.

If she were to ever meet Nanahoshi's friend, after saying that name, she would proceed to tell of her relation to Nanahoshi.

And so it's official designation was『Automaton SS-01 Anne』.⁴

They didn't yet know if Unit No.02 would be Deux and and Unit No.03 Trois, but they would work that out when they got there.

The SS stood for Seven Star.

That was how the first product of the Seven Star Series『Anne』was completed.
And her brothers and sisters slowly increased over the years.
But let it be known, that she was the only one with nipples.



Translator Notes and References

- 1. Chris is short for Christina and the Japanese “Kurusu” is not considered as masculine a name as Chris is in English.
- 2. “Gomenkudasai” Literally translated, it’s basically two apologies, but it’s a rather common way to inquire whether there is anyone is whether it be a home or a workplace.
- 3. Nanahoshi is in kanji here and Hajime is written with the character for one.
- 4. The name “Anne” and the French “Un” for one are both written the same in Japanese.

Chapter 13 — A Day at The Office

Part 1

I wake from my sleep.
It feels like a great morning.
At one time, this was the moment I most feared.
I feared that I would be killed in my sleep, or wake up someplace that wasn't my bed like a dim forest.

Until I found a bed that I felt was safe, I was always afraid of sleeping.
But there were also times when the lack of sleep chipping away at my alertness almost got me killed.
It got better when I found a technique that let me stay wary while sleeping...
But during those days, I never would have thought that I would eventually be able to sleep without worry.

“...”

I steady my breathing and head for the office's study.
The study is piled up with documents detailing the differences between the original history and the current loop.
Written in them is the『Original』and the『Alternate』.

The history where I did nothing is the『Original』.
And events that changed as a result of my actions are the『Alternate』.

I write these documents for the sake of defeating Hitogami.
To defeat Hitogami, I have exhausted no little amount of effort but there is a need to reach where he is.

The battle with Laplace 80 years from now is especially important.
Minimising our losses against him is directly related to defeating Hitogami.
And for that purpose, I'm going to freely use the『Original』and the『Alternate』to change history and ensure we have as much fighting power as possible.
Of course, since I can't take the documents with me on the next loop, right before each loop I organise all my actions and have no choice but to memorise

them and try again.

But this loop is different.

Rudeus Greyrat is here.

With each person he encounters, the world greatly changes.

I had intended to record the differences as usual, but before I knew it they had turned into an observation diary of him.

Most of the pages have Rudeus's name written on them.

And with so many changes, my writings can't keep up.

I had originally intended to keep a detailed record of all events until the end of the loop but quite a bit of information has probably been left out.

Honestly, I don't think it has much point.

There's something odd about this loop.

It feels like something special is going on.

The chance of Rudeus being in the next loop is quite small which would render all these notes meaningless.

I most likely have to win with this loop.

That is what fate dictates.

We must store up as much fighting power as possible, I'll preserve as much of my Mana as possible and defeat Laplace with the bare minimum, so as to go all out against Hitogami.

That said, there's no reason to not take notes.

If I am to fail and on the next loop, Rudeus is still there, this information will certainly prove a powerful weapon.

"..."

And now I'll record today's happenings.

First up is the information that came through the Lithograph.

Thanks to this communication lithograph, collecting information has gotten considerably easier.

In all the previous loops, if some change occurred, without going to the scene and collecting the information myself, I wouldn't be able to know the result.

I had gotten used to it, but due to my curse, it was quite stressful work.

Compared to that, now I can do nothing but sit and the information comes flowing in.

Before I had to go through a number of loops to know the full extent of the changes resulting from a single action, the difference in convenience is astounding.

Although, if Rudeus didn't exist, I would never have needed such a comprehensive information network.

I alone would never have caused so much change.

If too much was changed, on the next loop I would wonder where to begin.

And I'm still troubled on how to treat the Automaton he created.

I saw the doll he had named Anne, but I never thought something like that could be made with human hands.

Pergius was surprised too, that it was more human than his spirits.

That doll is most likely the existence that the Mad Dragon King Chaos dreamed of.

Chaos has already passed and is no longer in this world, but if he was still alive, he would have loved to join them in their doll making.

If he is still in the next loop, I guess I'll put off collecting his treasure.

"Alright."

While thinking such things, when I looked at the communication lithograph I saw something rather interesting.

Information from Ariel.

It seemed as though Doga and Isolte got married.

As far as I could remember, the two of them were never married.

The chance of Isolte ever getting married was always quite small.

And children go without saying.

This would also have to be because of Rudeus.

How would I ever manage to reproduce this.

At my current level, I haven't a clue...

Although before I attempt to reproduce such an occurrence, I would have to see what kind of person their child is and what kind of role they'd play.

Depending on the circumstances, I may end up preventing their child from

being born.

But if I did that, Rudeus would most likely oppose me.

“...”

I do not wish to lie to or deceive Rudeus.

Even if in the case that he's in the next loop, he'd forget about everything.

Part 2

“Good morning!”

Mid way through my documentation Rudeus appeared.

“...Yes.”

“Is it paperwork again today? You're always so devoted Orsted-sama.”

“No more than usual”

“The fact that it's usual is what's important! Life is long after all so you have to take it little by little! As expected of Orsted-sama! You do understand!”

Rudeus sometimes gets strange.

He's normally quite docile.

But his attitude does follow a pattern.

When he gets this high spirited, it's because something good is happening.

And conversely, when he's very quiet and apologetic it means he has something hard to say.

He's rather easy to read.

“What's happening today?”

“As expected of the President! Vigilant as always! Hehe, This morning Lara said that she wanted to be with papa forever! How do I put it. Ehehe.

Chris is always clinging to me but I never expected to hear it from Lara, so I was a little excited. Hehe.”

“Did you bring them with you?”

“Yeah. I brought Lara and Sieg here on Leo.”

Sieg as well hmm.

That's somewhat unexpected.

But when I thought that, Rudeus's complexion took a turn.

“Aah, about Sieg! It seems that he’s a fan of Alek.
He enjoyed the story of the Biheilil Kingdom that he heard from Alek.
And he asked me if I was going to meet with the North God-sama to take him
along so he could hear the story again.
He’s with Alek right now.”

“Right.”

“Umm... Should I not have brought children to the office after all...”

“No, I don’t mind.”

Rudeus’s Achilles’ heel is his family.
He treasures them. Rudeus lives for his family.
He’d do anything for his family, and if you hurt them, you will become his
enemy.
He’ll hit you with all kinds of unthinkable attacks from all directions, and when
it looks like he’s about to lose, he’d easily throw away his pride and betray
Hitogami or the like and beg for forgiveness.

I can’t name too many people as devoted as he is.
So to be his ally, you have to pay attention to his family.
At the very least, any mistreatment is forbidden.
Which is why I’ll assure their safety to the best of my ability.
As long as I protect what is precious to Rudeus, he won’t betray me.
That would be impossible for Hitogami.

Leaving aside the calculating thoughts, it’s quite bizarre that Rudeus’s
children are immune to the curse. But I don’t dislike it.
I don’t dislike the liveliness.
It almost makes me feel like a normal person.

“Because your children are cute.”

I had intended to complement his children with a smile...
But Rudeus’s expression became serious.
Not good, this look is not good.
That is Rudeus’s cautious look.

I’ll have to be careful.
This man can suddenly go from peaceful to pulling off unbelievable things.

It might seem fine, but it's possible the next time I wake up I might be buried alive.

At this instant it would be simple to defeat him but if he came at me with a surprise attack...

"Even if it's Orsted-sama, I won't give you my daughter."

"...That wasn't my intention."

With that, Rudeus's face returned to normal.

"I'll bring the two in to say hello later."

"I don't mind. There's no need to be respectful."

"Is that right... Well, Lara is a somewhat impolite girl, so that's probably for the better."

Rudeus sat down on the sofa.

"Well then, let's work hard at work today as well! What shall we do today? A mock battle with the『MK 1』? Or maybe an adjustment of the Curse nullification Helmet?

Or maybe we should check on the progress of the『MK 3』or the adjustment of the『MK 0』?

Or we could conduct another meeting on our future actions..."

They're all things Rudeus is in charge of.

He probably wants to show off to his children.

But a little bit before when I was filling in my files, I remembered something.

It's just something small regarding the war with Laplace but it would be better to do it now.

"Yes, about that..."

This year a drought in the southern part of the central continent will cause a famine.

A number of families will die.

But that in itself isn't important.

It's the natural course of things.

The problem is one particular household among them.

It's an unimportant house without any particular characteristics, but the

youngest son alone is special.

If he is allowed to grow up, he will become an excellent commander.

And he will be in charge of the defensive battle at East Port against Laplace.

He displays unrivalled commanding ability and manages to delay the King Dragon King army for a substantial amount of time.

Normally I would make sure the Laplace war doesn't occur, and it's better to not intervene considering mana conservation.

But this time, although the war with Laplace is unavoidable, Rudeus is also here.

So considering the direction we're heading, it would be better to make sure they survive.

"And that's how it is."

After my explanation, Rudeus seemed somewhat disappointed.

"Lara won't be able to see me working on a business trip..."

"Then it's fine if you leave tomorrow."

Seeing how disappointed he was, I offered an alternative but Rudeus shook his head.

"No, without knowing exactly when they'll starve, it's better to act quickly. I don't think we'll be late but humans are fragile, it wouldn't be odd for them to die any day.

I have arrangements to set out in place for time such as this so it would be best to leave as soon as possible."

But somehow I ended up convincing him.

"If that is fine with you then so be it."

"Of course. I'll begin preparations immediately."

Rudeus immediately left for the office's warehouse to pickup the equipment he always has on stand by.

He returned about fifteen minutes after that.

He's dressed in traveling clothes with a backpack full of provisions, the Scroll Vernier, and all kinds of other things.

He faces me and brings his fingers together and with his flat hand he hits his forehead.

“Well then, I’m sorry to ask this but if you could please take the two of them home at a suitable time.

Leo is with them so they should be fine, but it would be too late by the time something happens.”

That goes without saying.

I have no intention to make light of the reason that he’s my ally.

“Of course.”

“Well then, I’ll be off.”

After he says that, he immediately heads to the basement where the teleport magic circles are located.

In these past few years, his decision-making time on these kinds of actions has shrunk.

And he will almost certainly accomplish his mission.

I had used people to accomplish tasks in previous loops before.

I have also had people you could call subordinates.

But I have never had someone so capable who would faithfully carry out my orders.

I can somewhat understand the feelings of Hitogami as he manipulates his apostles.

“ ... ”

I could tell that I had knitted my eyebrows.

Rudeus is a reliable man, but I shouldn’t overuse him.

At the very least, feeling like Hitogami is not a good thing.

That said, the things I can do are not many.

I have already used too much Mana in this loop.

I may have decided that I would fight with Rudeus, but it still isn’t a good enough reason to waste Mana.

“ ... ”

For now I put on the curse nullification helmet and head outside.

When I pass Faria she jumps a little.

“Aah! If it isn’t the president.”

I seem to have surprised her.
But thanks to the helmet, it's only to that extent.
Without it, her reaction would be quite different.
The way to make it has been recorded in the documents. Improving in would be difficult but reproducing it is possible.

"Rudeus-sama just went out a little while ago, is Orsted-sama also setting out? Would you like a companion?"
"No need. I'm only going a short distance. I'll be back soon."
"Understood."

I head outside.
I could hear a voice coming from the side.

"It was then! Whoosh! Taking advantage of the slight opening, the Sword King Eris cut off the Third's arm!"

A voiced echoed in the back courtyard, originating from a small patch of shade.

"Standing before the now one armed Third was North God Kalman the Second and the Demon Lord Atofe Ratofe!
Behind him, the Mad Sword King Eris and Sorcerous King Rudeus!
His front and back were covered by people who wouldn't listen! There was no use in talk!
The duel was practically decided! The Third prepared himself!
But in the moment they thought victory was in their grasp! Whoosh! The Third ran into the Earth Dragon valley!"

Under the shade there was a man sitting on a rock.
And on the ground in front of him, a young boy.

The man on the rock is North God Kalman III Aleksander Ryback.
The young boy is Sieg Saladin Greyrat.
He's gotten much bigger since I last saw him.
Time really does fly by quite quickly.

"The Third ran!
Deciding that he would have his chance at victory another time, he fled into the Earth Dragon Valley.

There was no human who follow him into the valley and live.

The only two were his wounded father Alex and the Demon Lord Atofe!"

"Those two aren't human?"

"Correct! The two of them aren't human!

They possess the blood of the Immortal Demon race!

And their opponent who had just barely escaped from them was the same!

But then! Wham! With a huge sound, a giant had flown!

Who was it that jumped in!

Was it the Second? The Demon Lord? The Mad Sword King!?

No! It was Rudeus Greyrat!"

"Papa!"

Sieg is in a daze with Alek's story, but I wonder where Lara is?

I tried searching for a presence and there was one coming from the mountain of straw in the office garden.

When I went to take a look, there was a blue haired girl calmly napping on top of it.

At her feet a huge white beast is keeping watch.

Lara and the Sacred Beast Leo.

Lara is the Saviour that the Sacred Beast chose, but looking at her like this, she's nothing more than a child.

But I wonder why she suddenly said she wanted to be with Rudeus.

I just parted with Rudeus at the entrance to the office so I don't think more than an hour has passed...

Come to think of it, I remember hearing that Lara liked pranks.

Perhaps to get out of being punished for pulling some joke, she used her father. If that's the case, I feel sorry for Rudeus, being used like that...

"Still riding his half destroyed Magic Armour, he alone chased after me!

All by himself!

He hit the Third who was trapped in the air! Wham! He hit the Third with the huge Magic Armour! And hit! And hit!

BOOOOOOOM! The Third and Rudeus crashed into the floor of the Earth Dragon Valley!

When the dust cleared, standing there was the one-legged, one-armed Third!

And Rudeus, his Magic Armour full of cracks!
Nobody was coming to help. It was a one on one fight!”
“One on one!”

It seems like Alek is telling Sieg the story of the Biheilil Kingdom.
Lara most likely fell asleep right as she got here so he’s been entertaining Seig.

“But Rudeus didn’t have the strength to overcome the Third.
He managed to cut off a hand with a surprise attack, but that wasn’t enough to defeat him!

The Third thought that and began to carefully observe Rudeus.
He had let down his guard.

He thought that because Rudeus is a Magician, in a fight, he would shoot off his specialty the Stone Cannon while retreating.

He didn’t think he could lose to someone who did nothing but run away!
Rudeus did exactly that! He ran and shot Stone Cannons!

He may have underestimated his opponent, but the Third was a battle hardened veteran!

To avoid the Stone Cannon, the Third retreated for an instant!
But it disappeared from right in front of him! It was a feint!”

“A Feint!”

“Klang! The second he realised, the Third sent out a slash! Too weak! Because of the feint, because he took a step back it wasn’t a fatal wound!

But it still worked! The Third flew backwards but suddenly... his foot floated in the air.

It was Rudeus! He still had a trump card saved right for the very end! Gravity manipulation!

The same magic as the King Dragon Sword Kajakt! The Third for just an instant, floated!

Wham! The instant he realised, the third had already been sent flying! Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang Bang! He hit! And he hit! And he hit!

Rudeus’s strongest Magic Tool blasted the Third into pieces! Dudududu! The Third was so longer breathing...

He could no longer stand.

Kling...! The King Dragon Sword fell from his hand.

Rudeus had won!”

“Hooray!”

Sieg let out a cheer.

Alek seems satisfied talking about his own defeat.

Feeling the pleasant atmosphere I walk up to Alek.

“Aleksander Rybak.”

“Oh, If it isn’t Orsted-sama! Are you heading out?”

“No, Rudeus just departed.”

“I saw, he entrusted the children to me. He said to take them home at an opportune time and explain the situation to his wives.”

I see, Rudeus left it to Alek.

There’s no reason for me to go... I guess.

“That’s good to hear. I’ll leave it to you.”

“Yes sir!”

I nodded at his response and headed back inside.

Part 3

Evening.

After completing the first stage of my recount, I left the study.

It seems Alek hasn’t yet delivered the two of them home.

The sun is about to set, it would probably be better to have them back sooner.

Fariastia’s hours must have ended because she’s no longer at the reception.

“Your Papa normally walks around like he’s cowardly and incompetent.

In fact, he probably really is a coward.

But when he gets mad he’s scarier than anyone else.”

Even now, they’re still talking.

But now instead of telling a story, he sounds as if he’s teaching something.

Sieg is listening with a serious expression.

“When facing that unyielding spirit, I lost.

Orsted-sama apparently had a similar experience.

Of course, someone such as him didn’t fail to overcome it like I did.

And because I couldn’t defeat his spirit, was most likely the reason I became his

subordinate.

But do you understand why both Orsted-sama and I recognise him?”

“Hmm?”

“That’s because he’s strong.”

“Papa, strong? But Papa would lose to Red Mama...”

“Yep. That’s right. But it’s a little different from normal strength.”

I’m also somewhat interested in how Alek sees Rudeus.

“Your Papa has no redeeming features besides his mana.

Your Papa can’t wear Touki by nature.

His judgement isn’t particularly high, and when confronting unexpected circumstances he’ll panic.

His eyes aren’t that good. Even with his Magic Eyes, he’s only reached the level below Orsted and I.

His reactions are slow. No matter how far ahead he can see with his Magic Eyes, his body can’t keep up.

He’ll hesitate when killing people, he has trouble delivering a killing blow to a flesh and blood enemy.

His chantless magic is a point in his favour, his magic activations speed is unmatched among Magicians, but compared to us swordsmen, it’s still too slow.

In the time it takes him to kill me with one『Stone Cannon』I can kill him three times.

That is to say, no matter what he does, if I feel like it, I can take him out.

No matter how many different kinds of tactics he has, none of them have any meaning.

And I’m not even the world’s strongest. In just speed, I’m one or two ranks below top class.

Of course, he could retreat and throw out all kinds of complex magic, but him having the chance to do that is unlikely.

In other words, if you systematically analyse him, he just doesn’t seem cut out for fighting.”

“Papa... Is weak...?”

Sieg looks quite sad.

Having their father admonished to their face, there are very few children who that wouldn't make sad.

Especially because Rudeus showers his children with love.

“Aah, don't give me that look.

I'm not done talking yet.

Listen. The reason your Papa is strong, is because he know his weakness better than anyone.

That's why he can get rid of his weakness and think of how to take advantage of his strong points.”

“Hmm?”

“Yup. He can use the Magic Armour to increase his speed many times over.

Meaning that, even if you catch him by surprise, he can still manage to survive.

That means that even I can't take him out.

Of course, he's still not on the same level. The disadvantage doesn't change.

But he has taken a step towards our level.

He can't wear Touki, he's a magician whose only merit is his mana.

But despite that, he doesn't run, he stands against us.

Sometimes fair and square, sometimes cowardly from behind, sometimes borrowing his friends power, and sometimes all by himself.

Do you know why, even though he's at a disadvantage, he can still fight?”

Sieg shook his head.

“It's to protect you.

For the sake of the family he loves dearly, he can't die.”

When Alek said that, Sieg's eyes seemed to sparkle.

He excitedly clenched his fist and looked up with a smile plastered on his face.

“Papa really is a Cheddar Man!”

“Yeah, he's a Cheddar Man! A true Hero!”

A word I haven't heard before came up.

Cheddar Man?

Just what kind of metaphor is that?

Or maybe it's a person?

This is the first time I've heard it over the years.

In that case, it might be something Rudeus coined.

That man is constantly creating new words.

I'll ask him next time I see him.

I'll add Cheddar Man to the list of items in my head.

"Hey, North God-sama! I want to be a Cheddar Man too!

"You can, to be a true hero requires effort. My father is a true hero and he said so. Did your Papa not tell you that?"

"Papa didn't say anything."

"Is that so. Well, when you get a bit older, your Papa will tell you too."

"What will effort do?"

"It will make you stronger."

"How?"

"You have to train your body, and study the sword and magic."

"I understand! North God-sama please teach me the sword!"

"Eeh? Me?"

"Can't you?"

"If you want to learn the sword, can't you have your Mama teach you the Sword God Style?"

"I want you to teach me! I wanna surprise Papa and Mama!"

"Although I do consider myself somewhat good, all I could pass onto a disciple of mine is what my father taught me, somewhat badly, I'm not all that cut out for it."

North God Kalman III Aleksander Rybak's childhood memories are quite unpleasant.

When he became a North God, there were more than 20 people studying under him.

But after a few years, they had all separated from Alek to walk their own paths. After that, Alek never took on another disciple.

"But you look so cool when you're fighting. If I have to study I want it to be with the North God."

"But me taking a disciple with my inexperience..."

Alek seems troubled.

I suddenly remembered Rudeus.

While declaring his own inadequacies, he taught all kinds of people all kinds of things.

And without exception, they were all thankful for it.

I am one of those people.

“Aleksander Ryback. Go ahead and teach him.”

Hearing me say that, Alek seemed quite taken aback.

He looks as if he hadn't even noticed me approach.

Even though that couldn't have been the case.

“Orsted-sama... But I'm still not even qualified as a North God...”

“That's exactly why you should train him. If you watch him and raise him all by yourself, you just might discover just what it is about the North God Style you are lacking.”

In the original history, North God Kalman III Aleksander Ryback corrected himself after losing to Jino Blitz.

And in his despair he took a single child as his disciple.

That child was in no way talented, but by watching him grow and and correcting himself, he matured into a true North God.

And in the second Laplace war, North God Kalman III proved himself to be history's strongest North God.

I don't know where that child might be in the current loop, but Alek has already experienced a loss.

So I might as well accelerate his acceptance of a disciple.

And incidentally, Sieg is also quite talented.

It's most likely the Laplace factor but his physical strength is far above other children.

It's not on the level of the Miko Zanoba, but in the future he'll be able to swing a sword with ease.

Those who stand out from the crowd end up at the North God School.

And this case is no exception.

And while I'm talking, there was one thing that Alek failed to understand.

Rudeus's strength is not just his mana.

It's that when it comes down to it, Rudeus had friends who will come running for him.

And that he has friends in places other than a battlefield.

In a one on one fight, Alek may be correct...

But by being with his children, maybe he might realise that.

And from that, maybe he'll become a North God more noble and strong than in the original history.

"I'll convince Rudeus for you."

"...If Orsted-sama says so, I understand."

Alek smiled at me and turned to look at Sieg.

"Alright then, Sieg-kun, From tomorrow onwards I'll be training you. But if you want to surprise your Papa and Mama, you'll have to keep it a secret from them, alright?"

"Yeah!"

Sieg is looking at Alek with sparkling eyes.

Alek seemed bewildered at having such a small disciple after such a long time. He must be quite enthusiastic to genuinely teach someone swordplay after so long.

They'll definitely make an excellent pair.

But...

"...Aleksander Ryback, may I ask you something?"

"Of course!"

"What's that thing on your back?"

On Alek's back is a large number of some kind of spiky fruit.¹

There's also something that looks like a human child's clothing mixed in. You could call it some kind of prickly child insect.

"Aah, this was Lara-dono's work. She must have been bored because she snuck up to me from behind and stuck it on."

"..."

"It was the doing of a child after all. I'll remove it later."

Lara really does like her pranks.

I'm convinced.

"And the girl herself?"

"She went into the office."

She couldn't have found her way into one of the teleport magic circles could she?

But the second I thought that and began to search for a presence, she walked out from the Office.

With a blank look, on top of Leo.

Fariastia's presence was also in the office.

She was most likely keeping Lara company on the second floor.

"Lara-dono! Leo-dono! It's about time we returned home!"

"...ok."

Lara grabbed Sieg and pushed him onto Leo's back.

She then got on herself and proceeded to sit behind Sieg and hold him.

"Then we shall head out."

Under Alek's leadership Leo began to walk.

Hmm?

Right as they walked passed me Lara looked at me and gave an evil little laugh of success.

I wonder what the meaning of that was.

I didn't understand but after seeing them off, I returned to the office.

Fariastia was once again at the reception, probably having come down with Lara.

I told her that it was about time she went home and headed inside.

"Hmm..."

It was then I understood the meaning of Lara's smile.

My chair.

The spiky fruits were scattered all over my chair.

If I were to sit like this, my behind would most likely be covered in them.

A prank.

Feeling the corners of my mouth slightly raise, I gathered the fruits and put them in a bag.

But when I was about to put the bag in the desk I felt something was off.

“Hmm...?”

It was a slight unease.

It's the same unease as an assassin using poison.

Because of my Magic Itemmana bestowed item and Saint Dragon Touki, not even ancient poisons can harm me but I still felt some unease.

“...”

But I had opened the drawer completely off guard.

And then grasshoppers came jumping out at me from inside.

5 of them.

So I was supposed to feel relieved after seeing the spiky fruits and then this was meant to surprise me. A two stage plan.

Lara most likely waited behind the reception until I went out, before intruding to commit the crime.

She must be happy with herself.

“...”

But Lara really is the only one who I have no idea how she'll grow up. That's most likely what Hitogami is afraid of about that child.

Part 4

Several day later, Rudeus returned.

He didn't just complete his goal, but apparently also made it rain and somewhat helped the drought.

He really is an efficient man.

After receiving his report I decided to tell him about Sieg.

“...I would like to have Sieghart commute here regularly.”

“Why would that be?”

Naturally he seems somewhat puzzled.
Now how shall I explain it?

“There’s something I’m somewhat interested in so I would like to watch over him.”

“...Is it dangerous?”

“No.”

“Will he be back by curfew?”

“That’s not a problem.”

“Understood. For the time being I’ll let the women know.”

He probably hasn’t asked for any more confirmation due to his faith in me.
Or perhaps he simply gave up due to my insufficient explanation.

“You aren’t going to ask?”

“No, I somewhat understand that someone will be teaching him something...
Although I don’t understand why it’s a secret from me.”

“Aah.”

“I think it’s better that way. Give Alek my regards.”

We’ve been seen through.
But I’m grateful that’s the case.
My interactions with Rudeus will continue.
It’s better when the other party can understand you.
It’s somewhat better as a secret after all.

“Well then, I’ll be off.”

“Good work today.”

Right as Rudeus was about to leave,
I remembered a certain something I wanted to ask.

“Rudeus.”

“Yes?”

“What is a Cheddar Man?”

“He’s a Hero who’s head is made from cheese.
He finds hungry children and tears off bits of his face to feed them.
He defeats bad guys who try to scare people with a single punch.”
“...Was there a man like that in your previous world?”

“In my world he was made of bread filled with red bean paste.
But since red bean paste doesn’t exist here it was replaced with cheese.
I tell it to the children as a bedtime story.”

I learned something.
Cheddar Man.
Although I don’t understand why he tears off bits of his face.

“What about it?”
“Nothing, I was just a little curious.”
“I see. Then I’ll be heading out.”

After seeing that Rudeus had left I returned back inside.

Part 5

When I returned to my desk I saw the bag of spiky fruits that Lara left.
The grasshoppers had already hopped outside.
After she got home she was probably scolded for the prank she was running away from too.

“Haa.”

I let out a sigh.

Lara and Fariastia.
Aleksander and Sieg.
And Rudeus and Cheddar Man.

This loop really is quite fresh.



Translator Notes and References

1. It literally referred to some fruit known as “Xanthium strumarium” But that sounds odd in writing so I fudged it to make it sound better.

Chapter 14: Greetings to the Latrea House

Part 1

I thought we should go for a family vacation.

The children are steadily growing up.

Lucy has grown accustomed to the Magic University.

Lara doesn't really like to study, but she's still plenty energetic.

Ars is somewhat wild like Eris but he's quite diligent in what he does, and he's not one to pick on those smaller than him, so he should be fine.

Sieg is still quite small and he's still a crybaby, but since he started being trained by a certain someone, he's gotten somewhat stronger.

Lilly and Chris are still young, but they've recently graduated from breast milk and have begun their education.

There's not yet a seventh, but the 6 of them are still young children.

Everyday is lively and the problems never stop.

That said, Lara and Ars have begun to go to school, and Sieg and Lilly have begun to walk, so after all of them began their studies, things have quieted down somewhat.

There's no signs that Hitogami might be plotting something.

The truly peaceful days have continued.

So that might be why.

Why I thought that it might be time to show the children the world outside of the Magic City Sharia.

I wonder why I suddenly thought that.

Maybe because that night was particularly lively.

Lucy was keeping to herself.

Lara was playing with her food.

Ars was being picky.

Sieg was stuffing his cheeks.

Lilly was cutely sipping her soup while dirtying her bib.

And Chris was on my lap with her mouth open wide waiting for her next bite of food.

As well as three wives, one little sister and two mothers.
It was lively dinner table.

But it's not just dinner time, lately the house is always lively.
But that's a given.

With 6 children there's no way it wouldn't be.

Ars and Lara are rascals that love to cause trouble.

Lily and Chris, maybe because they're the same age, often get into loud fights.

Lucy has it together and Sieg is rather docile, but that doesn't mean they're always quiet.

The noise never dies down.

So that's when I thought:
As long as we have the chance.

I have no idea what will happen when the children grow up.
I might be somewhere fighting someone with Orsted, or some of them might have left Sharia.

When they get older, they'll be going to School in the Asura Empire for three years, so they might settle down there.

Or they might even decide to leave the house by themselves before that.
Paul also fought with his father and left.
Something similar might happen to me.

Hitogami also has it in for me, so there are plenty of times that he could interfere.

But children never do exactly as they're told.

Lara doesn't like studying or training so she often runs away.

But that's fine.
In any case, that's what I thought.

That the children won't all be together forever.

That's why, we should take a family vacation while we can.

Part 2

Of course, it's not as if we'll be circumnavigating the world.
For about a month we'll visit some people we haven't seen in a while and show the kids something different.
Nothing too adventurous.

So with that said, the destination is the Millis Continent.

The plan is as follows:
First we use the Teleport Magic Formation to transfer to the Holy Millis Kingdom.
There we'll stay there for about 10 days.

The first half will be with Zenith's parents and Cliff and the church.
After that is a field trip to the Adventurers Guild HQ, the Magic Tower, and other places the city is famous for.
Next is a trip by carriage along the Holy Sword Highway for a quick stop off at the Great Forest.
Then a visit to the hot springs in the Azure Dragon Mountain range.
And finally we return home via the Teleport circle around there.
And while we're there I'll make contact with the Ore God that I had put off meeting up till now.
It should go something like that.

We've already discussed it as a family and have been planning for half a year.
Roxy has her job as a teacher after all, and I had to consult Orsted as the company president.
The kids also have their studies, everyone has plans.

That said, the entire family had agreed.
Lucy especially, she may have gotten the idea when we visited the Asura Empire before, when she heard that we're going on a trip she was really excited.

I already asked Elinalise if she wanted to come along and she made her feelings rather apparent.
She was quite happy to have an excuse.
She goes to see Cliff a number of times throughout the year, but she would

much rather be with him all the time.

Cliff also wants to move up the ranks faster so he can bring Elinalise and Clive to him, but the Millis Church's power struggles seem like quite the ordeal.

And since we're going to be visiting the Latrea house, Zenith and Lilia are coming too.

I'd like to have the Miko tell me what she's been thinking again.

Lara can apparently converse with her, but she doesn't talk about it all that much.

Whenever I ask her, she just looks like it's a pain.

At her age she might not understand the importance.

Leaving Lara aside, although it may be personal business, the Miko and Pope are Millis officials so I did make appointments to meet with them, so there's a good chance I'll be able to see her.

This time I've also asked Norn to come.

I promised Claire I would last time after all.

No, I don't think I promised.

In any case, I decided it would be better to take her along while she's still in the happy aftermath of her marriage.

And I've already conveyed the fact that she's married.

No matter who the recipient is, my words will not waver. Including the fact that he's from a Magic Race.

I still haven't gotten a response, she might be mad.

She might just be pretending she didn't hear.

But, it's probably a matter of race.

At first Norn refused on the grounds that her child was still young.

Maybe because Sperd children mature fast but, Norn's daughter Luicelia was already off breast milk and had all her teeth. Her hair is green like her father and she's just started taking steps swinging around her cute tail, but she had yet to open her eye.

But Ruijerd said something to her.

"I'll look after Luicelia. You should go."

"But..."

"You have to treasure your family."

And so Norn listened to those words heavy with emotion.
It seemed like Ruijerd wanted to go himself.
“Although I am somewhat oblivious to Human customs, a greeting is at least necessary,” he said.
But bringing along both a baby and a Sperd along on a month long trip would be a little difficult.
Although we could put a hat on them like Sieg, we can’t hide the tail, and it’s not just the green hair, but a real Sperd...
There’s no way we wouldn’t create a ruckus wherever we went.
And there’s also Ruijerd’s assignment from the Beheilil Kingdom.
And so, although he was somewhat downtrodden, he sent Norn off.

“I understand. But I’m only going to greet them. I won’t be going to the hot springs, I’ll be returning home.”
“You don’t have to leave, Just take your time.”
“I want to be together with Ruijerd-san and Luicelia.”

And so, Norn, while bragging as such, agreed to come along.

I’ve left Zanoba and a few members of the Mercenary corps to house sit.
Beet and Jiro are home, but just in case.
I’d be troubled if we got robbed and there’s also the care of the vegetable garden.

So that’s what our travel plans look like.
It’s somewhat roundabout, but sticking to a strict schedule isn’t as fun.
About this much is perfect.

Part 3

It’s been half a year since then.

It’s snowing as always in Magic City Sharia
We called a carriage and we’re now riding through the snow laden city towards the office.
After giving our greetings to Orsted we went through the teleport formation to Milishion.
The other end of the teleport circle comes out in a secret hideout in Milishion.

And all of a sudden we're in the Millis continent.

I never strongly felt like I wanted to take a trip.
But since it was possible, I would have liked to take a formation leading to outside the city so we could see it from there.
Witnessing the gargantuan towers, the excitement of walking through the massive ramparts, it's something that has to be experienced.
That said, when we go outside to sightsee, we'll be able to do that then.
There's no rush.

After getting on the carriage I had prepared there earlier, we headed straight towards the Latrea house.
We have 14 people, 15 including me.
Taking that into account, I prepared 2 large carriages.
The first is me, Roxy, Zenith, Lilia, Lara, Chris and Leo.
The second is, Sylphy, Eris, Lucy, Ars, Sieg, Lily, Aisha and Norn.
We had already bid Elinalise and Clive a temporary farewell and the two headed straight for Cliff.

The kids were quite excited to be traveling for the first time, it took some time for their mothers to calm them down.
Lara seemed especially excited by the Milishion scenery.
It was rather surprising considering her usually unimpressed demeanour.

"Lara, don't lean out the window."
"...Ok."

Every now and then she'll start leaning forwards before Roxy tells her to sit back down.
But she still places her head out the window to look around.
I'm worried that she'll suddenly fall out, but Leo is holding onto her clothes so she should be fine.

"...Mama, when we get closer, there are colours everywhere."
"Milishion is home to many famous designers and they create many kinds of clothes aimed towards commoners, everybody here likes to dress up."
"Even though it's winter, there's no snow, it's not even cold."
"Around here, snow doesn't fall that often."

And when the season comes around, it rains heavily.
But that huge tower keeps it at a fixed level so the city never floods.”

Hearing Roxy explain things to Lara like that is quite calming.
Seeing the two like this just emphasises their resemblance.
She’s almost like a Mini-Roxy.

“Papa, I’m hungry.”

Chris is always happy on my lap.
It’s just, maybe because she’s scared of the outside, or she doesn’t like the shaking of the carriage, she’s been gripping my sleeve the whole time.
But if I pull it off, she’ll probably start crying.

“We’ll eat at great-grandmother’s house, so just wait till then ok?”
“K.”

My words go over smoothly with Chris.
Were it one of her mothers who said so, she would most likely have thrown a tantrum saying she wanted to eat right now.
Sylphy and the others might not like it, but when Chris is around it gives me a sense of superiority.

But when she grabs my hand like that and rubs it on her stomach, it makes me want to go buy her something.
Hey, you, stallkeep over there. Give me your most delicious apple, huh? You don’t know which one is the most delicious? Then I guess I’ll take them all.
Don’t worry. Whatever’s left will be a gift to the Latrea house. Now I kinda want to say it.

Oh right, I brought a bunch of greeting gifts for the Latrea house, but I wonder if Claire will like any?
She wont say something like “I don’t want such low class filth in my house,” right?
She wouldn’t be so rude as to say it right?

While thinking that, I suddenly noticed that Lilia looked rather stiff.
“...Lilia-san, what’s the matter?”
“I’m feeling somewhat uneasy.”

“About what?”

“Claire-sama.”

There’s one major obstacle to overcome on this trip.

My grandmother, Claire Latrea.

That obstinate grandmother, when she heard that we’d be staying in Millis, immediately offered to house us.

I’m glad I haven’t replied.

Just giving a greeting and not staying at the house was also an option.

When I think about the way she treated Norn, Aisha and Lilia in the past, it makes me uneasy.

But I’m not outright against the old lady’s suggestion.

Claire has one fatal weakness, that’s my adorable children. I don’t think it would be impossible to spend a few days quietly.

So that said, first we should just go check it out and say hello.

And if it seems like it won’t work, we can just go stay at an inn.

We came to this conclusion at a family meeting.

Even so, Lilia was still called all kinds of things last time she was here.

So it’s not unusual thinking that she might hear it again would make her uneasy

“Claire-san may say those kinds of things, but she is thinking of us. Her thinking may be somewhat inflexible though... But if it comes down to it, you can always just stay behind me.”

“No, it’s not about me.”

Lilia’s gaze moves towards Roxy and Lara.

Right this time, Roxy and Lara, in other words, Magic race descendants, are coming.

And Norn also married someone from a Magic race.

And I’ve also brought all three of my wives this time.

And Claire is an adherent Millis believer from the Demon expulsion faction. She had previously said that she wouldn’t interfere but that was years ago. People tend to forget small promises over time.

Of course, Roxy has already taken that into consideration.

During the family meeting she had said “There’s no problem”.

“Lara and Lily may have a somewhat hard time with it, but they already know to some extent that Demons living among humans get that kind of treatment.”
Is what she said.

Norn is also prepared for anything she might say.

I’m not worried about any name calling there might be, but I’m scared that if she says something that upsets Lara that she’ll do something weird.
I’m scared of her pranks.
Her victims have no limits.

“It will be fine Lilia-san.”

Roxy said that.

“If it’s not, then we just won’t go in at all.”
“Is that the case?”

I also have my doubts.
It’s not that I don’t trust Claire.
She did invite us after all.

I think inviting us over just to insult us would be against noble etiquette.
Although I don’t know what kind of etiquette they follow in Millis.
But I still don’t think they’d invite us over from such a long distance away just to kick us out.

It’s just that, although it goes against common sense, you don’t know what someone might do when something they don’t like is right in front of them.

“ ... ”

Zenith grabbed Lilia’s hand.
She didn’t say anything, but the meaning was conveyed.
I tapped on Lara’s shoulder.

“Obaa-chan what was that?”

Lara looked at me like it was a bother and then at Zenith, and then back at me and said:

“...Great-grandmother just worries a lot, it’ll be fine, she says.”
“Thanks.”

For once she actually passed on the message.
Well if that's what Zenith says, then surely it will be fine.

Part 4

The reception at the manor was welcoming.
The maid was full of smiles and the butler was polite.
At the very least it was more welcoming than the reception I received last time I came to Milishion.
After they took our bags we were guided to Claire's room.

"I thank you for the long journey."

Once Claire saw us, she said that still seated.
Still seated.
Though I won't say her attitude was poor. She's the master of the house after all.

"Not at all, we only just left."

"Of course. Though I'm still having trouble wrapping my head around it..."

Claire pressed her fingers against her temples and looked like she wanted to say something, but she decided against it.
It was probably the fact that I use teleportation magic as if I own it.

"I'll introduce my family."

"Yes. As you see fit."

They all line up.
The children, three wives and Norn and Aisha.
Today Aisha isn't in the maid outfit, but a lovely dress.
At first glance, she could be mistaken for the eldest daughter.
Lilia is the same, but she already moved with Zenith to another room.

"Mary."

"Yes Madam."

Claire gave the order to the maid beside her and put out her hand.
The maid took hold of her hand and slowly helped her to her feet then handed her her walking stick.

She looked rather fragile leaning on her walking stick.

She had none of the fortitude she had previously.

It seems the reason she didn't stand when we walked in wasn't her pride.

"Are you unwell?"

"I'm getting old after all."

"You couldn't possibly be so old that your legs would weaken to such an extent..."

She's might be old enough to be called great-grandmother, but both I, and my kids were all born quite early.

I wouldn't go out of my way to ask her age, but since Zenith is about 40, she should be around 60, 70 at most.

"Would you like me to attempt healing magic?"

"No need. You're an outstanding magician, but this is Milishion and I am a noble."

Meaning that this is something that can't be healed with healing magic. Well if she says it's fine then I won't press it, but I'm somewhat uneasy seeing her like this.

"Rather than your concern, I'd like continue with the introductions."

"That's true."

Well then I guess I should start.

First is Sylphy, Roxy and Eris.

The three wives.

"This is Sylphy. The first wife I married. The house is normally left under her supervision."

"I'm Sylphiette. I thank you for today's invitation. I look forward to staying with you."

As expected of Sylphy, you can see the elegance from her experience with greetings.

Nobody would ever guess that she grew up in the Fittoa countryside.

"This is Roxy. She is from the Migurd Race, a Magic Race, and although she looks as such, she's older than me. She's currently a teacher at the Magic

University.”

“I’m Roxy. I’m sure you have some thoughts about my race, but still, I look forward to staying with you these next few days.”

When I introduced Roxy as a Migurd, Claire didn’t even flinch. This is the first time they’ve met, but she did already know about it. I guess she doesn’t plan to comment on it for now.

“This is Eris. A Master of the Sword God School. She is a member of the Great Asuran Noble family Boreas and the little sister of the current head.”

“I-I’m Eris. It’s nice to meet you.”

Eris is somewhat flustered. At the Asuran parties she’s always calm but it seems my grandmother makes her nervous.

“...”

Claire doesn’t say anything. She doesn’t seem to be planning to scold me for having three wives. Next is the children.

“This is the Eldest daughter Lucy”
“I’m Lucy Greyrat! Great-grandmother, It is excellent to finally meet you! I am pleased to be staying with you for these next few days!”

Lucy gives greeting while gripping the edge of her skirt. Claire’s face slackens a little. Even though she’s strict with her grandchildren, she can’t help but find her great-grandchildren cute.

“The second daughter Lara.”
“...I’m Lara.”

Lara gives a bored greeting and her face says that it’s a pain. Claire’s eyebrows knit back up. It seems it has nothing to do with the fact that they’re her great-grandchildren.

“He’s the eldest son Ars.”
“I’m Ars! I’ll be eight years old soon! Pleased to meet you!”

That said, the only unsociable one is Lara.
The rest of them are all polite and Claire doesn't seem to have any complaints.
After Ars, Sieg, Lily and Chris all gave their greeting normally.

"You two next."

After I prompt them, Norn and Aisha step forward.
Together they gave what you could call an elegant bow.
Norn and of course Aisha.

"I'm Norn Sperdia. It's been quite a while grandmother."
"I'm Aisha. I thank you for the invitation today."

They both give greetings you couldn't offer complains about.
Claire, still leaning on her cane, pointed her chin at the two.

"Yes, it's been quite a while, the two of you."

Just that.
She didn't ask anything about the fact that Norn was married.
Maybe she thought it would be better not to ask here.
In any case, there hasn't been a negative atmosphere just yet.
Most likely because of the fluent greetings.
Good, goo... Aah, Lara is picking her nose.
I'll have to tell her off for that later.

"This is Claire Latrea. She's your great-grandmother. We'll be staying with her for around 10 days so be polite."

After I say that, Claire gives a slight bow.
It's filled with elegance as always.
I'd love for the children to learn from her.

"I am Claire. I am here to welcome you in place of the Manor's master. Please instruct the maids and butlers as you wish. You might find the difference in culture somewhat unpleasant, but please treat this house as if it was your own."

"I thank you for your kindness. Everyone give your thanks."
"Thank you very much! We look forward to staying with you."

The children all bowed at once and Claire sat back down quite pleased.

Good work.

And so, our family vacation in Milishion began.

Part 5

“Rudeus-san, I have something I wish to talk to you about. Do you think you could remain behind?”

Is what I thought, but right as I was about to leave the room, I was called for. I told the rest of the family to go on without me and stayed back.

Claire’s expression was, well, normal.

She didn’t seem mad.

“Please sit.”

“If you’ll excuse me.”

I sat down in the chair in front of her as told.

And as if there was some kind of switch in the chair, someone came out with tea.

They didn’t bring out tea for my family, but I guess we weren’t sitting down. There weren’t enough seats after all.

“There’s no need to be so punctilious. I have no intentions of reprimanding you.”

It seems I’ve been seen though.

But considering how she was before, I hope she’ll overlook me being somewhat wary.

“Then what do you wish to talk about.”

“Simply idle conversation.”

I stole a look at her face.

There was nothing behind her expression and she simply sipped her tea.

The way she drank was captivating.

There’s probably some etiquette behind the way she drinks her tea.

I drank too while trying to mimic it.

They’ve used some good tea leaves.

“Speaking of tea... Lately Aisha has started raising a tea plant. I’ve brought a bag of the leaves with me, you should try it.”

“Then we shall do that tomorrow.”

“They’re quite nice.”

Aisha frequently changes what she’s growing.

At one point she was growing some kind of herb, she even cooked with it, but she suddenly stopped.

I wonder why?

Ah, right. Chris was allergic to it wasn’t she.

When the herbs started to become fragrant, her nose would start dripping.

Although healing Magic could fix the symptoms, it couldn’t get rid of the allergy itself.

“Is Aisha still not married?”

“That seems to be the case.”

“But it seems Norn did.”

“Yes.”

“What kind of person is he?”

I thought I had gotten past it, but it seems I can’t avoid this topic.

But I’m glad Norn isn’t here and she’s asking me.

“He’s of a Magic race.”

I had already said so in the letter.

Thinking that it would be pointless to gloss over it, I said that.

“I am already aware. Although he doesn’t seem to be here today. What kind of person is he?”

Oh, she meant that.

He did let his just married wife out by herself.

So she wants to know why he’s not here.

“Their child is still small, so he’s looking after the house. He told Norn that at least she should go and see her grandmother. It’s definitely not because he’s looking down on you or the Latrea house...”

Claire’s eyebrows knitted together.

“I didn’t ask why he’s not here, I wish to know what kind of person he is.”
“Eh? Aah, Of course, he’s a man worthy of trust. I’m sure I wrote this in my letter, He’s an ally of the weak and doesn’t tolerate hate. He has a strong sense of justice. Their idea of status is somewhat different from Humans’ but he’s the captain of an elite unit in a large scale army, so he has a somewhat high position in the village. Aah, on top of that, one of the『Demon God Slaying Three Heroes』Pergius-sama has his eyes on him. Also...”
“...That’s enough.”

Claire stops me half way through and looks me in the eyes.
Did I say something bad?

“Just from what you’ve said just now, I can tell you’ve left Norn in the hands of someone you trust. And if that’s the case, although I have some thoughts on the matter, it’s not my place to say them.”
“I’m thankful you say that.”
“There’s no need for that. I had already promised you that I wouldn’t interfere.”
“So you did remember.”
“Of course. My back may be failing me, but my mind is as sharp as ever.”

That’s good.
But I wonder why she was asking about that...
Because we’re simply making idle conversation aren’t we.

“In any case, Roxy-san is awfully small isn’t she.”
“It’s a trait of the Migurd Race. They are much older than they look. Aah, but it’s forbidden to call her that to her face. She’s quite mindful of it.”
“I understand that. I am a woman of the Latrea house. My mouth may be foul, but I will not find fault with other’s appearances.”

I had half meant it as a joke, but apparently she took me seriously.

“And since the previous incident, I thought it ideal to learn more about the Magic and Beast Races.”
“I think that’s a fine goal. Whether you love or hate something, knowledge itself is important.”

Rather, it’s possible to end up hating something simply because it’s unknown to you.

It's human nature to fear the unknown.
We're a group that acts before learning.

"But, that Lara girl is a problem isn't she."
"...Yes."

"Of course I'm not talking about the fact that she's half Magic Race. It's about her attitude towards someone she's meeting for the first time."

"I am sorry about that. I thought she'd be fine with at least a greeting, but lately she hasn't been doing as she's told."

"...I won't say too much about it. But it's my outlook that strict discipline is appropriate where necessary."

She was somewhat roundabout when saying it, but she's probably telling me that physical punishment would be necessary.

Well that are times when that might be better.

It's just that Lara is already quite experienced with that.

Eris is in charge of spankings after all.

She may look wild, but Eris is quite calculating

"You should understand why I say so."

"For the future."

"Exactly. A first impression is extremely important, it can change someone's mental image of you. So you don't exhaust their initial good will, and to avoid dissatisfaction down the line"

It's starting to sound like a lecture.

But somehow it seems like Claire is enjoying herself.

"But her mother, Roxy-san despite the fact that she's from a Magic race, she seems to be well aware."

"How so?"

"When standing next to the legal wife Sylphy-san, she was always a step back. Her reserved greeting was also good. Her attitude displays that she knows her position."

So it was about that.

I have no intention of labelling them as legal and secondary or numbering them...

No, that's not it.

The problem is that Roxy is thinking like that in the first place.

“Eris-san... is a soldier after all, so her attitude can't be helped.”

“I'm glad you think as such.”

“...”

Claire looks like she's about to give another lecture.

I'd appreciate it if she didn't say too much.

Eris is trying her best after all.

“In any case Rudeus-san.”

“Yes?”

“I thank you for bringing them along.”

Claire said that as she bowed her head.

I won't ask who.

It's not Norn or Aisha or Roxy.

It's no one in particular.

It's everyone.

At the same time I realised her meaning, I understood.

That I was a bit too on guard.

That I should have looked at this more lightly, like a trip to grandma's house.

And so, our family vacation in Millis began.

—○●○—

Millis Travel Log

Chapter 15: Ars's Millis Tour

Part 1

Ars was bored so he decided that he wanted to walk around town alone.

When he first got here, what first caught his eye were the numerous towers. According to White Mama, they're huge Magic Tools, and it's because of them that the city has remained peaceful for so many years.

After that was the shining silver building. According to Red Mama, that's the Adventurers Guild HQ, and most adventurers will visit it at least once.

He absolutely wanted to go to those two. Of course, if he told his father, he would take him there. Just today, after he said he wanted to see the sparkly gold building, he took the smiling Ars along with him.

But once they were inside, he didn't let Ars walk around freely. After they went in, Ars was running all around with curiosity in his eyes, but his father threw all kinds of limitations at him, "You can't touch that," "You can't go there."

Honestly, Ars thought they were too restricting, and boring.

But what Ars didn't know was that the Millis Church was already very considerate of Rudeus.

The Millis Cathedral, especially the Inner Sanctum, are places only those with special permission may enter.

Under no normal circumstances would they allow rowdy children to enter.

But Ars was still a child.

He thought that as long as he asked to go to the the tower or the silver building, he'd be able to go.

But he realised that his movements would be restricted like today.
That's all he thought.

And so, when his father and the others left for the Inner Sanctum with the guards and the woman with the big chest,
He and the other children were told to play in the gardens until they came back,
he saw his chance.

(Let's see how close I can get to the silver building and the tower.)

Thinking about it, his entire life had been restricted by his parents.
“Don't go there,” “Don't walk around town alone.”
Whenever he went out, he was always with Aisha or Leo.

Since he was little, he had readily obeyed, and even now he didn't intend to oppose.

Although he didn't completely understand the intention of his mothers, even though he was a child, he knew it was to teach and protect him.

He knew that it was dangerous to go outside, and that he shouldn't go alone.
He didn't necessarily hate having to go together with Aisha.

But even so.
Sometimes he just felt like he wanted to go somewhere without someone watching him.

“Hey, Lara-nee, let's slip out. You wanna go take a look at the silver building and the tower?”

And so the one Ars chose to invite was Lara.
For a change, Lara was alone today.

Leo was with the Guardian beast of the girl they called Miko, the Snowy Owl, and had left Lara behind.

And so Lara was also thinking that this was her chance.
Lara and Leo have always been close.
And even now, she had never disliked that.

But he followed her everywhere, and was always warning her about her actions, so lately she had been thinking that it was a little irritating.

So when she heard Ars' invitation, the edges of her mouth raised just a tad

and she nodded.

“I thought that too.”

And so the two began to put their plan into action behind Aisha’s back. They timed their escape for when Chris shouted “Papa’s gone!” and started crying and they moved to a bush, running from shadow to shadow towards the exit.

“Hey, where are you two going?”

And the one who had spotted them was Sieg.

“Shhh, we’re just going out to play a little.”

“They’ll get mad at you if you go outside.”

“I know that you’ve been sneaking out the back by yourself lately.”

“I-I did not...”

Ars knew.

Sieg was always going out by himself.

But he didn’t know why he wasn’t being scolded for going out by himself.

Ars thought that because he never saw him leaving with Aisha or Leo.

And so he was a little annoyed that his little brother was the only one allowed out alone.

In actual fact, Sieg wasn’t alone.

Sieg, and of course Ars didn’t know, that when he sneaks out of the house, a Rudo Mercenary is always secretly guarding him.

Of course, under the orders of the worrywart Rudeus.

“So if you want me to stay quiet, so will you.”

“...Ok.”

“We’ll be fine, we’re only going to the silver building and that huge tower to take a look.”

“Eh, you’re going to the adventurers guild?”

Hearing him say silver building, Sieg’s eye’s shone.

He had heard many a heroic tale from Alek.

And many of them ended up at the Adventurers HQ so he had an extraordinary curiosity.

“Yeah.”

“Then, I want to go too!”

And so Ars and the other’s left the Millis cathedral.
With mischievous hearts and full of curiosity.

Part 2

Ars, with Sieg and Lara in tow, headed towards the town.
The architecture was completely different to that of Sharia’s, and was filled with all kinds of houses and buildings with odd shapes; it set Ars’s heart on fire. They had seen a lot of it in the carriage ride here, but there was something different about seeing on your own two feet.
Just having the pavement under you is a big change.
Even walking around a new city is exciting by itself.

A group consisting entirely of children, especially Sieg with his green hair, stood out, but they didn’t mind it.
They had gotten quite used to those gazes in Sharia.

“Lara-nee, you have to walk forward. It’s dangerous.”
“K.”

Lara responded, but kept looking around with sparkling eyes.
She was even more entranced than Ars at the tidy city.

“Hey, do you think we should have invited Lucy-nee? If we get separated, she’ll get mad at us.”
“If we had told her where we were going, she would have stopped us.”

Sieg was always quite a coward.
And even though he’d been training by himself and gotten quite good with a sword, Ars still couldn’t figure out why he was still scared of everything.

“Ahh Lara-nee! What’s that!?”

What Ars was pointing at was a strange work of art.
It was a green sculpture in the shape of a owl.
It looked somewhat similar to the white bird they had seen, but it was obviously artificial and a little ominous.

Lara looked at it and answered with confidence:

“...That’s a fountain.”

“There’s no way someone would make a fountain that looks like that.”

“But it’s a fountain.”

“Eeh... That can’t be right...”

But just as Ars went to inspect it, water squirted out of its mouth.

“Aah, It really is a fountain! Amazing! How did you know!?”

“I saw one similar at Juli-san’s place.”

That was one of Rudeus’s『Byproducts』The Merlion wind fountain. It was based on the Miko’s guardian beast Nurse and was presented to her upon its completion. That said, putting something like that in the Church’s Headquarters would be troublesome, But because of it’s stuffed animal like qualities, the Miko complained that she wanted it close by, and so it was installed near the Church for the townspeople to enjoy.

“Ohh.”

Seeing Ars and Sieg’s gazes of interest, Lara puffed her chest out with pride.

As the three continued their conversation, they crossed a bridge.

And as they did, the scenery around was quite different. The buildings were smaller and there were more people. You could even see people carrying swords or walking around armoured in large numbers. The rugged hard faced people seemed to have increased. They had crossed from the Sacred ward to the Adventurers ward.

“It got kinda normal.”

“Yeah.”

But it was a scene that they had already gotten used to in Sharia. Although they could be called muscular and rugged, compared to the Rudo Mercenaries, they looked rather weak. Not to mention Red Mama.

“Lara-nee, which way was the silver one?”

“Hm. This way.”

“Alright, let’s go!”

The exuberant Ars walked forward followed by an excited Sieg with a somewhat sleepy looking Lara behind them with a little smile on her face.

“Wow, amazing!”

“Aah!”

Once they arrived at the main street, the Adventurers Guild HQ immediately came into view.

It was a giant silver building placed right in the centre of the street. There was no way you could miss it.

“Ar-nii! Hurry up!”

Sieg ran forward in high spirits.

A complete 180 from his previous opposition.

No matter what he said, there was no way he could fight against the charm of the『Adventurers Guild HQ』That was the start of so many legends.

“Aah, wait!”

Ars and Lara, with anticipation in their face once more, chased after him. They wanted to get a closer look as quick as possible.

Seeing the children suddenly start running, those around them suddenly thought “Danger”.

The result of children running was usually bumping into someone or getting run over by a carriage.

But they completely overturned the people’s’ assumptions and the three children skilfully weaved through the crowd of people.

And they even stayed to the side where the carriages didn’t pass.

That was the result of daily training.

Part 3

“Woah~!”

After arriving at the staircase in front of the entrance, Sieg let out an excited shout.

It wasn't though they hadn't seen a building of this scale before.

The Magic University in Sharia was a structure of impressive stature.

But there was just something different about it.

The Adventurers guild HQ was silver and incredibly shiny.

The Magic University was filled with reds and browns, kind of like a potato.

“Ar-nii, it's the Adventurers Guild!”

“Yeah, it's the Adventurers Guild!”

“It's completely different from ours!”

“Ours is shoddy compared to this!”

“But this smell inside is the same.”

“Yeah, it does smell.”

Muttering some rude remarks, they walked through the gate.

Very quietly.

Some of the dim-witted adventurers liked to pick fights with children who walk into the guild.

That was something that Blue Mama had told them.

Ars was basically wishing for a fight, but if he started one after already sneaking out, Red Mama would get mad.

Red Mama is scary when she's angry. She'll spank your behind until it's bright red.

And if Sieg or Lara got hurt, Red Mama wouldn't be the only one angry.

Making Blue Mama or White Mama angry, the thought had Ars shaking in his boots.

But thinking that he might get to see Papa angry, made him kind of want to start a fight.

Up until now, Papa would always be complimenting or pampering them, rarely would he scold anyone.

They had never seen Papa truly angry before.

“Wow~”

The inside of the guild was just as splendid as the outside would suggest.

The inside felt amateurish but also composed, and there were a lot of desks. The number of adventurers was also completely different to outside.

In the Magic City Sharia all the magicians seemed like beginners, and all the warriors and healers were quite skilled.

But here it was the opposite. The ones that looked like beginners were the warriors and healers but all the magicians looked experienced.

“Ars.”

Seeing that Ars was satisfied by the scenery in front of him, Lara called out from behind.

“There are 3 more floors.”

Lara pointed at the information board in front of the stairs. It outlined the purposes of each of the floors.

The first floor was a reception and a meeting place, the second floor was a store where you could buy equipment and raw materials directly from the guild, the third floor was restaurant, and the fourth floor was a guild room for large scale events and meetings.

“Let’s go up!”

But as Ars began walking towards the stairs, a shadow was cast over them. When he turned around, a woman caked in makeup with huge breasts was standing there.

“This isn’t a playground. What’d you come here for?”

“S-Sightseeing! We’ve come from Ranoa Kingdom...”

The reason he managed to reply right away, was because his Papa had told he what to say.

“Your parents?”

“I-it’s just us right now.”

“Right... Then, how about I guide you around? Although I may not look it, I’m a staff member here. Today my shift ended in the morning, so how about it?”

After she said that, she showed them the crest on her shoulder. It was the same one as the people from the reception.

“T-then please do.”

Ars’s heart was pounding.

Ars loved voluptuous breasts.

Of course, he didn’t hate small ones, but he liked big ones better.

The woman in front of them was about the same level as Aisha, which was a size sufficient to cause Ars’s heart to pound.

“Alright then, leave it to me. Ok? The first floor, as you can see, is the reception area.”

The woman began explaining all kinds of things with a friendly smile. The three of them followed her around on their tour of the Adventurers Guild HQ.

First floor, second floor, third floor, fourth floor...

The woman guided them around so politely that you would never imagine she was dealing with children.

They had intended to move around freely, but they ended up with a guide. They had strayed from their plans, but everything they saw was fresh. Especially the guild room which Sharia’s guild hall didn’t have. It was so lavishly designed that you wouldn’t imagine it belonged to adventurers.

“And that’s the end. Did you have fun?”

Right after she was done, she turned towards Ars and said that.

“Yes, it was interesting! Thank you very much!”

“You don’t need to thank me... So what are you doing after this? Are you going to meet your mum and dad?”

“N-no...”

“Hmm. Then would you like me to walk you home?”

“That’s fine. We’ll go home by ourselves!”

He turned her down because they had yet to see the tower. He lied to her, but if they started walking to a different part of the town, she would surely notice.

There was no way they could go home without completing their objectives.

And so, Ars and the others left the Adventurers Guild.

Their plans had changed slightly but it turned out alright in the end.

“Now then, on to the next one!”

Ars was pointing not just at the tower, but the sun which had passed noon was beginning to fall.

Part 4

They saw all kinds of things on their way to the tower.

A complex aqueduct, on top of which were small boats.

A carriage carrying large amount of what looked like monster materials. And protecting it was a crowd of adventurers.

They would shout in excitement whenever something caught their interest and were enjoying their field trip quite thoroughly.

But because of all their dawdling, the tower which should have been quite close, was still surprisingly far.

By the time they had arrived there, it was already dusk.

“Wow~, it’s huge...”

Seeing the tower at night from this close up was overwhelming for them. It was so thick that it took them several minutes to circle the whole thing, and it was so tall you couldn’t see the top.

And when you looked at it close up, you could see faint symbols carved on the whole thing.

Although the Magic Tool wasn’t comprised of the whole tower, to protect the Magic Tool on the inside, large scale barrier magic was carved around the tower.

Of course, Ars didn’t know that.

He simply thought that Lily would have liked to see this kind of thing.

“Ar-nii, it seems they won’t let us inside after all.”

“I see. Well I guess it can’t be helped.”

Although Sieg had managed to find the entrance, there were two soldiers guarding it, it seemed no one was allowed inside.

That's a matter of course.

Ars did want to see the scenery from the top of the tower, but since it seemed impossible, he had the judgement to give up there.

"Haa... Well then, let's head home!"

"Yeah!"

"K!"

Ars gave a triumphant shout and began to walk back so Lara and Sieg followed.

"Lara-nee, it was so much fun!"

"Yeah. It was fun. That dragon head mounted in the guild room, I want one too."

"Alright, when I get bigger I'll get one for you."

"I'll help too."

They were delighted to see all kinds of things they wouldn't normally have. Sieg was especially excited and had been continuously been talking at Lara.

But while they were walking Ars was suddenly assaulted with unease. Could it be.

No, it can't...

"Hey, Ar-nii, remember that giant sword mounted on the wall in the Adventurers Guild, do you know what it is?"

"No?"

"It was one of the 48 Magic Swords."

"You sure know a lot."

"It was being used as a decoration, so it was probably a fake, Alek-san once drew a picture for me."

"Hmph..."

"Aah, wait up!"

Ars gave Sieg a rude reply and walked faster.

Sieg was confused at Ars's sudden silence but kept talking to Lara.

Lara was slightly curious about Ars's demeanour but she didn't do anything about it and just kept listening to Sieg.

The three continued to walk.

They frequently trained so no one complained that they were tired or their feet hurt.

But seeing Ars walk in front of him silently, Sieg inevitably got quieter.

Before long he stopped talking entirely and the three walked in silence. Slowly through the night.

And so, the day ended.

Part 5

Several minutes after the sun had set.
The three were standing in a dark alley.
There were no traces of people in the silence around them

“Hey, Ar-nii, how much farther is it?”
“...How should I know.”

Ars didn't intend for it to turn out like this.
It's not like he didn't think of the trip home.
On the way there they would aim for the huge tower, and on the way back they would aim for the shiny gold building.
It's a golden building after all.
It stands out from quite a distance, and they would just be returning along the path they had already come.
That's what he had thought.

But the second the sun began to set, everything was dyed yellow.
And the long shadows cast by the evening sun, erased any traces of the path they walked.
The fact that they had stopped to look at all kinds of things on the way there also had a part to play.

“What do you mean you don't—”
“Shut up! I don't know what I don't know!”

Ars yelled at him and Sieg shook a little.
Hearing his reliable brother yell at him, Sieg realised just how serious the situation was, and tears started to seep out of the corner of his eyes.

He may have started training with Alek, but he was still a young child. He was also normally a good kid and wasn't used to being yelled at.

"Ars."

Lara quietly said that to Ars.

Ars looked behind him.

He saw Sieg with tears in his eyes and the still expressionless Lara.

But in Lara's eyes he could see a small amount of anger.

"...I'm sorry. Lara-nee, we're lost."

"Yup."

"Do you know how to get back?"

"...I don't."

Lara feebly shook her head.

Lara always looked like nothing could faze her, but now she had none of her usual arrogance.

Ars felt somewhat hopeless seeing her like that.

But he didn't cry, nor did he complain, instead he clenched his fist.

"E-Everything will be fine! Leave it to me!"

This was something he started.

So he had to fix it himself.

That's what he thought.

Ars took Lara and Sieg's hand and gripped them tightly.

To relieve the other two, he mustered up his non-existent wisdom, and thought.

Blue Mama had once said:

When you're in trouble, don't panic. First think of what you can do.

"Umm... Right, when we left the big street, there were people there, we'll just ask them how to get there. The shiny gold building isn't that far, they should know where it is."

It had only just turned night.

When they left main street, there were still plenty of people, it should be easy to ask one of them.

Blue Mama had also said this:

If you don't know something, don't be afraid to ask someone.

“...What if the people are mean and don't tell us?”

Ars didn't know how to refute Sieg's negative declaration.

He didn't think they wouldn't know, but he couldn't say the possibility of someone not telling them was zero.

Continuing Blue Mama's previous statement:

But it's not as if people will tell you anything you ask, there's a possibility they might lie, so you have to be careful.

“If that happens... Ah, right! Papa told us “If you ever get lost in the city, just go find a church, if you throw out uncle Cliff's name they'll help you out! Priests can't lie to us right?”

“Ah... That's right!”

A priest still could lie to them,

But the image that came to his mind was Clive's father, Cliff.

And although they had only met a few times, in his mind Cliff was a person who would never lie.

“Well then, let's go home.”

“It'll be fine so don't cry. Cheddar Man doesn't cry.”

“I-I'm not crying.”

Strength returned to Sieg's face, and Ars looked like he had a bit more energy. And Lara who now looked much livelier, gave an encouraging smile.

“Alright.”

So first is main street or a church.

There were no people around them, but if they ran into anyone on the way, they could just ask them.

That much would be simple.

But along with that thought, Ars had a different sense of unease.

Not only had he gone and gotten lost, he had gotten Lara and Sieg dragged along with him.

His mothers would definitely be disappointed.

Red Mama would be especially angry.

Even Blue Mama and White Mama would.

Normally Aisha would cover for them and try to soften the blow, but this time they had snuck out under Aisha's watch.

There was no way she'd be on their side.

"Eeh..."

"Ars, are you crying?"

Lara peeked in front of Ars's face.

Ars wiped the tears off his face with his sleeve.

'I-I'm not crying. There's just some dirt in my eye! Lara-nee, don't go anywhere! If we get separated here, it's over!"

"...K, got it. You sure are reliable."

"Stop it. It's my fault this happened."

"It's my fault too."

Lara pat him on the head and he reddened slightly before facing forward.

They quickly started walking.

Staying in the gloomy empty alley, really was about to make him cry.

There was no doubt that they were going to get scolded.

He had prepared himself for that.

Aisha would probably be mad at him too, but he remembered to make sure to apologise.

And the second they turned the corner.

"Whoops."

They ran into a woman.

One with a voluptuous chest.

Seeing a chest of familiar size, Ars reflexively made a sound.

"Aah..."

"Hmm? You're the kid..."

It was the woman who had guided them around the Adventurers Guild HQ that afternoon.

“O-Onee-san? Why?”

“Huh? Why else. I’m heading home after work, my house is this way after all. What about you? It’s already dark, if you don’t get home your parents will get mad.”

Ars was relieved.

Because someone they knew had appeared.

Hell is merciful... was a phrase that Ars didn’t know, but for now their future looked better.

“Um, we got lost. Do you know where the main street, no a church or the shiny gold building is?”

“Shiny gold, do you mean the cathedral?”

“Right, that one! Cathedral!”

“Of course I know. There’s no one who lives in this city that wouldn’t.”

Ars and Sieg looked at each other.

But then Ars calmed his expression and cleared his throat.

He had lessons from White Mama on how to act when asking people for something.

“Um, do you think you could guide us there? I’m sure our father would reward you.”

“...Silly, lost children shouldn’t be so formal. Come on, follow me.”

Ars remembered.

White Mama once said:

Connections between people are important.

Someone who you might have only just met, could end up coming to your aid when you need it.

Surely she was talking about this.

Ars matured just a little that day.

Part 6

“We’re here.”

And so the three of them had arrived at their destination under the guidance

of the woman.

“Eeh?”

Is what they had thought.

The scene in front of them was that of a dark alley.

There wasn't a single trace of anyone around them, the walls were scrawled with obscenities and the trash covered floor gave an overwhelming odour. No matter how dark it was, he could tell there was no shiny gold building around them.

“Umm, Where? Eeh?”

“That's no good. Didn't your parents tell you not to follow around people you don't know?”

Hearing footsteps suddenly surround them, Ars was shaking. They were surrounded by vulgar laughs and a number of men.

Ars could tell that they were planning on kidnapping them. And even though he had realised that, his thoughts were still a mess. The woman was a staff member at the Adventurers Guild and had kindly guided them around.

So why...

She had said she had gotten off work, but she said the same thing at noon...

“You lied about working at the guild!”

“I didn't lie to you. This is a side job. Just a little bit of extra money. There are lots of kids like you in this city. Orphans who want to become adventurers and come to the guild but leave without joining. And once they leave, if they can't make it back home before dark, this is what happens.”

“Dammit!”

Ars immediately picked up a broken stick from the ground and took a stance to protect his brother and sister.

“Ar-nii...”

Sieg was shaking while holding onto Ars's sleeve.

Lara was expressionless as always, but she looked somewhat pale.

He couldn't even protect the two of them.
It was his fault it ended up like this.
It was his mistaken judgement.
But now, what could he do right now?
What had his mothers told him... What... What...!?

“ANYONE! IS ANYONE HERE! WE'RE BEING KIDNAPPED! PLEASE HELP!”

Ars shouted.
If anything happens, before you think about fighting, look for help.
That was what Blue Mama had said, or was it White Mama?
Or maybe Aisha.
No, it was probably something his Papa had said.

“Cry and scream all you want, no one's coming.”

Ars could tell that was the case and immediately moved to his next line of thinking.
What he remembered next, was something Red Mama taught him.

『First, carefully observe the enemy』

Ars remained on guard and calmly looked around.
The alley was a dead end. There one one person in front of him and two behind him. They all had swords.
But compared to Red Mama, they were weaklings.
They had no presence nor bloodthirst.
They were at a level common in Sharia.
They were small fry that would piss themselves and run in front of Red Mama.
All he had on hand was a stick that looked like it would break after one hit, but he had already been trained in unarmed combat and he could somewhat use magic.
If he did as he practiced, he could surely win.
Surely, probably, it will be fine, probably.

“Ar-nii, are you going to fight...? I-I'll fight t-to.”
“You stay back Sieg!”

Although that's what he said, Ars's knees were shaking.
The stick in his hands was shaking, his breathing was rough and he looked like

he was about to burst into tears.

He was about to fight three adults in pure darkness.

And on top of that, he had to protect his brother and sister.

That kind of pressure was a first for Ars.

“Ooooh, what a brave big brother. But there’s no way you can win you know? Although these guys are ex-adventurers, their skills are the real deal.”

“Shut up! Don’t you touch them!”

“Haa, don’t hurt them too much. These kids come from somewhere high up, so we’ll get quite the ransom for them.”

The two responded with a “Yes Ma’am,” and charged at them.

Ars felt his stomach tighten,

And as he turned around and put as much mana into his fist as possible—

Clap Clap Clap

When something broke the silence.

It was the sound of clapping.

It came from behind the two men encircling them, and everyone stopped moving.

At the same time, a white lump jumped over the two men.

After it did a quick once around of the situation, it sniffed Lara to make sure she wasn’t injured, and turned to the men and snarled.

“GRRRRRR...”

“LEO!”

It was Leo.

But the once clapping wasn’t him.

Because he didn’t have hands.

“Alright. That’s enough~”

It was a familiar voice.

A voice so familiar there wasn’t a day that went by without it.

With her dazzling brown hair and a fang¹ that fit her, she walked out of the darkness.

Dressed in a maid outfit, protruding her huge chest, holding a lantern.

“Aisha-nee!”

Ars called out her name.

She wasn't his sister.

She wasn't his sister, but if he called her aunt, she would get angry.

“Taadaa Ars-kun, I've come to save you.”

Seeing her carefree smile, Ars was about to cry.

But Ars and the others weren't the only ones relieved.

Seeing that their opponent coming from the darkness was a big dog and a maid the men became confident again.

“Bitch, who's maid are you...”

“The Greyrat house.

Aah, around here it would be better to say the Latrea house.

The family of Carlyle Latrea who has long served the Holy Knights. You've heard of them right?”

The Holy Knights.

Hearing that name, the men were suddenly flustered.

The men weren't well versed in the names of nobles,

But they had at least heard of the Holy Knights.

They were famous among believers, they were the private army of the Millis Church.

“I would give up on holding those kids for ransom. It won't end well for you.”

“I-If I was afraid of the Holy Knights, how could I go on kidnapping.”

There was no way they weren't afraid.

They had heard rumours of how the Church treated heretics.

They would tie your hands and feet up and from your feet up, one by one, slowly smash every bone in your body.

Anyone else would see it as nothing but an act of sadism.

But they believed from the bottom of their hearts that what they were doing was good. And in response to your screams of pain all they would tell you is: “If you truly wish for salvation from the bottom of your heart, God will surely hear you. You may soon be by his side, rejoice,” while giving you a smile that could relieve you from the bottom of your heart.

Of course, it was just a false rumour, but the men believed it.

“It’s fine if you’re not scared of the Holy Knights... But how about the Rudo Mercenaries? Their super beautiful financial advisor will chase you to the depths of hell, it’s much scarier than dying.”

“W-Why would the Rudo Mercenaries get involved?”

“Of course, because the Rudo Mercenaries top dog is those kids’ father.”

The men suddenly looked startled and looked at the kids.

“Onii-cha... Whoops, Rudo Mercenary Chief, Rudeus Greyrat.

Right Hand of the Dragon God, influential to many nations and a master mage. He’s normally quite gentle, and would just keep talking even if you poured liquor over his head at a party.

But he treasures his family quite highly, if he found out that his children were attacked, what would he do I wonder...?”

“Y-You’re just making it up.”

“Do you really think that? I’m starting to get tired of trying to convince you.”

“Even if i’m wrong, if I take you out here, it makes no difference.”

“Really now. Leo, do it.”

At that command, the white beast moved like a storm.

First he went to the man in front of him bit his leg and shook his head.

The man’s leg snapped with a clean sound and Leo let go.

The man spun through the air and slammed into a wall.

And by the time the other man had turned towards that sound, it was too late.

He didn’t even have time to draw the sword on his back before Leo bit his hand, after a few snapping sounds he let go and bit at his face, then after being shaken around he fainted and was thrown at the wall.

“Hii...”

The woman didn’t get away.

As she was trying to climb the wall to escape Leo bit at her behind and threw her at the wall like the other two and she passed out.

“ ... ”

Ars watched the whole thing dumbfounded.
On top of that, Leo probably held back.
With that much power, he could have easily bit their heads off.
But he didn't.
He had gripped them between his teeth, broke their bones, and threw them into a wall knocking them out.
The opponents that Ars had feared.

"Is everyone alright? You're not hurt?"

Aisha completely ignored the passed out kidnappers.
She crouched in front of Ars and the others as if nothing had happened and checked them for wounds.

"N-No. We're fine."

"Really? Then let's head home."

Ars didn't know what was going on but he nodded, and Aisha flashed her tooth and smiled.

Part 7

Along the dark path.
The three were on Leo following Aisha and her lantern home.
The kidnappers had already been taken care of, after Aisha blew some kind of dog whistle, the Rudo Mercenaries came running and took them to the authorities.

Ars thought they would be scolded on the way home.
Why did you leave all by yourself?
Why did you get Lara and Sieg involved?

Aisha rarely got angry.
No matter how mischievous Ars was or how much trouble he caused for others, she never got angry.
She would always cover for him saying it couldn't be helped.
She would always kindly tell him not to do it again and to learn from his mistakes.

But this time, they were only a step away from disaster. And they had ignored Aisha who was always looking after them to do so. Aisha had come to search for them, but Mama or Papa probably got mad at her. She was told to look after the kids until everyone came back, but they ended up disappearing. And having someone you're watching over running away would also make you angry, no matter how gentle Aisha is, even she would be annoyed. Although Ars didn't think that far through, he could still guess that Aisha would be angry at them for what they did.

"Aisha-nee... Sorry."

And so, Ars apologised.

"Hmm? For what?"

"I left without telling you, and put everybody in danger..."

"Eeh? What are you talking about?"

But Aisha laughed and pat his head. He couldn't feel the slightest bit of anger from her actions. Ars wondered if she had forgiven them. But why?

"We're here."

"...!"

Aisha said that and Ars realised they had arrived at the gate to the Latrea house.

In front of the manor, Ars swallowed in anticipation.

Aisha may have forgiven them. But his mothers would definitely be angry. They had taught him to protect his siblings. And this time he had gone against that. He should at least be prepared for Red Mama's spanking. Even Papa might be angry.

"Thanks for your work."

Aisha said that to the gatekeepers and they followed her through the

kitchen's back door.

They walked down a hallway and opened up a door to a room filled with their family.

In there was:

Their three mothers, two grandmothers, a blonde aunt, a stone faced great-grandmother and their Papa.

“We have returned.”

Aisha bowed and the family looked at the three of them.

They were surely about to get scolded.

The first would probably be Red Mama.

Red Mama was always first.

That's what Ars thought.

“Oh, welcome home, you sure took your time.”

But Red Mama simply gave them a light answer.

“Was the Adventurers Guild fun?”

Red Mama's tone was soft.

“But you shouldn't have come home so late. Even if you were with Aisha and Leo, it's dangerous at night.”

“That's correct. Even though you were with them, you shouldn't be fluffing about outside at night. Why didn't you return sooner?”

White Mama and Lilia's words were somewhat harsh but they weren't angry. Norn-nee and Claire didn't say anything but their gazes said that they agreed.

“Don't worry too much, although they are a little late, we haven't even had dinner yet.

More importantly, did you see anything interesting?”

Papa, as always was sweet.

Zenith-Baachan was silent as always, but she didn't look like she was criticising them.

Zenith-Baachan was like that, but when she's mad you can just tell.

“Umm...”

Ars couldn't tell what was going on and was troubled on how to answer. There was a noticeable silence.

"In the Adventurers Guild's guild room, there was a Dragon's head on the wall."

Lara suddenly said that. Judging from her expression, it seemed like she knew the answer. she probably heard it from Leo.

"Aah, Papa, did you know, in the Adventurers Guild, they had a Magic Sword!"

After that Sieg began talking about the Adventurers Guild with a happy look on his face.

The previous dilemma had probably already slipped from his mind.

"Let's finish the story later. We'll get Lucy and the others and have dinner."

The atmosphere was calm and they went and had dinner.

Part 8

After dinner, Ars left the large dining room. He returned to his own room and as if it was natural, he turned around and faced Aisha.

"Why?"

The first thing Ars did was ask that. Why was no one angry at them. Why did everyone know they went to the Adventurers Guild. All those included. And Aisha just gave a smile.

"Wanna know?"
"Yeah."

Aisha changed from looking like she had just succeeded in a prank to a serious expression.

“I saw you when you three were trying to sneak out of the Cathedral’s courtyard.

You looked like you had lost to your boredom and were about to pull some kind of prank, but when I heard you say that you were going to the Adventurers Guild, I immediately followed.”

Ars could understand that.

Aisha had already seen through everything.

And on top of that, she didn’t meet up with them and let them do what they wanted.

Tailing them so that on the off chance that something happens, she can come out and save them.

“I didn’t think you’d go all the way to the magic tower though.”

She had always been protecting them.

Although she didn’t intervene when they were lost and on the verge of tears...

“...Then when when you realised we were lost, why didn’t you help us?”

“Hmm? Don’t you already know that?”

Hearing her joke like tone, Ars clenched his teeth.

Of course Ars knew.

It was his fault they were in that situation.

He thought that because of his mothers’ teachings, if something did happen, he’d be able to do something about it.

And even when he knew they were lost, he still didn’t give up.

He mustered up his own wisdom and tried to figure something out.

It wasn’t over.

And so Aisha continued to watch. It wasn’t her turn to come out.

But in the end, when it came to a situation where they would be injured, she came out.

Ars made a mistake so she came to save them.

And because that woman didn’t seem like a kidnapper, because she had kindly guided them around the guild, Aisha didn’t act until the last moment.

He couldn’t blame her.

Everything was his fault.

Aisha was still cleaning up after his mistakes.

“...Aisha-nee... I’m sorry.”

“Anything else to say, do you know what you did wrong?”

“We snuck out without telling you...”

“No, that’s not it.”

Aisha’s denial surprised Ars.

It was something unusual.

Aisha never really tried to teach Ars anything.

She always say “It can’t be helped,” and cleaned up the situation, but never said anything in regards to it.

But Aisha’s face was the same as always with a smile full of composure.

“Ars-kun, you thought I was irritating and decided to go out by yourselves right?”

“I-I didn’t think you were... irritating. Just a little... Aah, but I like you Aisha-nee.”

“Really? Hehe, thanks. Hearing you say that, you’re making me embarrassed.”

Aisha put her hands on her cheeks and swayed side to side.

“In any case, you wanted to go to the Adventurers Guild without someone watching over you right?”

“Yeah.”

“And you knew you shouldn’t.”

“Yes, but... Everyone would worry...”

“Of course, worrying everyone is bad.”

“Yeah.”

“But you never wanted to worry anyone on purpose right? You’re not that mean of a kid.”

Ars nodded.

He didn’t think too much about it, but he never wanted to worry anyone.

“You thought that after you went to see the Adventurers Guild and the tower I’d just ask “Jeez, where have you been?” and you’d just look at Lara and Sieg and laugh “It’s a secret.” like nothing happened?”

It was exactly that.

He didn't have that clear an image, but a situation like that was Ars's ideal. They would go out and enjoy themselves and return before they worried anyone.

They might have worried Aisha a little, but they would be right back and she'd say "So you were just over there," and give a sigh of relief.

"The fact that you couldn't do that is the problem."

Aisha said it straight out.

Ars had a goal.

To go to the Adventurers Guild without Aisha or Leo or anyone else.

She didn't care about the fact that they didn't want to go together, it was just part of the goal.

But if you set that as your goal, you have to complete it, is what she was saying.

"...Although you say that... Aisha-nee what would you have done?"

"Hmm. Even I'd have a hard time going to both the tower and the Adventurers Guild in that short amount of time. They're just too far apart. So I'd probably just go with the Adventurers Guild and save the tower for another day. Didn't you already know that you didn't have much time? So the second you heard our plans yesterday, you should have come up with a proper strategy."

"You're right..."

"I would have also brought a weapon, and a tool to contact someone. So just in case I ran into something I couldn't handle myself, I could call someone to come help."

Hearing it outlined so clearly, Ars realised what he did wrong.

Looking at it calmly, Ars really was careless.

It was too sudden and lacked thought.

Failing in that situation was a given.

At the same time he thought:

Aisha really is amazing.

"...I got it. Next time, I'll be more careful. So I don't worry anyone."

"Yes yes. As long as you keep that in mind. But while you have to be careful, you can't be scared of failure. Because you'll never be able to do anything that way. Fail to your heart's content."

“Eeh, but, if it ends up like today...”

“Don’t worry! If you fail, I’ll take care of it like today! Challenge yourself without fear.”

Aisha whacked her large chest.

Ars didn’t really understand, he remembered how today felt and smiled at Aisha.

“Alright. I understand Aisha-nee! Thanks!”

“You’re very welcome! Aww, Ars-kun you’re so cute!”

Aisha said that and hugged Ars.

And while he was having his head pat while being stuffed into Aisha’s soft chest,

Ars was earnestly thinking over the day.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

Translator Comment

I want to apologise because I don’t feel this chapter is up to the same standard as what I have the rest of them at.

The author decided he wanted to write it third person but from someone’s perspective (Just think about that for a second) and in Japanese this isn’t too hard to do because you just remove any first person pronouns and it works. but in English what you get is a clunky mess of perspectives.

I tried my best to minimise any impact it had on the tone but I’m not perfect. This is one language difference that can’t be overcome.

Chapter 16: Roxy's Duty

Part 1

That day I was reading on a chair out in the garden.

Eris and Sieg were nearby doing practice swings.

Although I think it would be fine to give it a rest while they're on vacation

Ars was with them just before but Rudy's aunt Therese had invited him off somewhere.

They're probably eating sweets inside her room by now.

Well that's fine, but he's always been somewhat...

Whenever he's with with women with large chests, he always looks quite excited.

I feel his relations with women in the future will be harsh.

Lara has been wandering around the garden with Leo for a while now.

Probably plotting something again.

Her actions have been somewhat incomprehensible as of late...

That aside, Ars, Sieg, and Lara are all usually quiet around the house, so today should be quite peaceful.

Sylphy and Norn took Lucy and Clive on a trip to the Adventurers Guild.

They invited me along with them, but I turned them down.

I don't really want to have a child come up to me, tell me "I'm trying to make a party of adventurers around the same age," and invite me to join.

And in Millishion Magic races always stand out.

There was also Lilly and Chris to look after...

But they had already fallen asleep, so I was left without something to do for the first time in a while.

And being myself, I decided to read a book.

And lucky for me, there was quite an interesting book in the Latrea library.

The title was:『Origins of Divine Attack Magic』

Its description of Resurrection Magic was quite interesting.

『During the Human-Demon Great War, the Demons utilised a certain magic to torment the Humans.

Resurrection Magic

A magic to revive and enslave the dead, now Skeletons, Wraiths, and Moving Armour type magic beasts are all that's left of this Forbidden Art.

Divine Attack Magic was birthed to combat Resurrection Magic. And during the First Human-Demon Great War the two continued to counter each other and evolved together.

After that, Resurrection Magic was declared a Taboo and was lost, and Divine Attack Magic though it still exists today, is in decline.』

There weren't any detailed descriptions of any magic formations or chants, nor do I have any intention of attempting Resurrection Magic, but reading about it has tickled my curiosity.

Ancient magic battles.

How romantic...¹

“...Roxy-sama.”

“Yes?”

Someone called me from behind and I looked up from my book.

Standing there was a maid of the Latrea house.

I have a bad feeling about this.

“The madam... Claire-sama has called for you.”

Claire Latrea.

She is more or less my grandmother-in-law.

Although we should be around the same age...

For now, I won't show any displeasure, but if it has something to do with the Demon Expulsion faction, I'm sure that will change.

I wonder what she wants to say.

To be honest I want to run...

I snuck a glance at Eris.

“Oi, tuck your arms in more! Raise your chin!”

She's teaching swordplay with the same enthusiasm as always.

If it has something to do with my race, that's fine, but if it's something else...
Like if it's about the children's education.
But if I run she might end up calling on Eris.

Eris can't handle complex or subtle conversations.
If they say something she doesn't like, she'll end up hitting someone.
That's just what she's like.
She would be able to rebuke Claire, but then a fight would be unavoidable.

"I understand."

This is just another duty as Rudeus's wife.

Part 2

Although I had gotten myself hyped up over it...

"..."

Currently Claire is quietly drinking her tea.
And I, unable to say anything, am simply sitting in front of her.
For some reason Lillia and Zenith are here too, Lillia being in the same shoes as me.
Zenith is the same as always.

Honestly, it's suffocating.
There are also some sweets next to the tea but I can't reach for them.
They're some of my favourites, but I feel like if I try to grab one, I'll get told off.
"You'll ruin your dinner," or something like that... I'm often having to tell Lara that.

It can't be a coincidence that both Lillia and I are here.
Although our husbands are different, we both have the same position that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call 'mistress'.
And that's something that the Millis religion doesn't accept.

That said, I am prepared.
I have been somewhat spoilt as of late, but I have always been prepared for insensitive statements.

It seems Lillia feels the same way I do.
Or maybe she was already prepared for it far before I was.
In any case, I can consider it a silver lining that Eris wasn't called here.

"It seems Rudeus-san is out."

Claire broke the silence.
She was the first one to talk since I entered.

"He went to deliver a gift to Cliff-san."
"Work it is. Even though he's on vacation with his family... He's exactly like Carlyle in that aspect."

Rudeus woke up early this morning and went with Elinalise to deliver『The Doll』to Cliff.
But would it be ok to call that work...?

The Doll.
It was an Automaton designed to take care of Cliff.
I had already received an explanation regarding Anne, and I didn't have any real opinion on her...
But even I feel this one is somewhat off putting.

After all, it looks exactly like Elinalise, even it's behaviour and tone are identical, only the ears are short.

The appearance was apparently her idea.
Recently Cliff's position has gotten quite high, he's been quite popular with women and has even gotten a number of marriage proposals.
So she intends to use it as a form of pesticide.

They were planning to introduce it at Cliff's wife, hiding the fact that she was an Elf.
Elinalise had spent many months teaching it how to act like her.

That said, Elinalise probably had another use in mind for it.
She had complained that "It doesn't have what it needs."

Of course it's not exactly like her to the last detail, but it really does look just like her, it's unnerving.
Rudy had once made a doll of me, but I really couldn't handle it if it moved.

If he had asked me for permission, I would have to turn him down.
Even Rudy wouldn't make one without permission.
And in my case, the real thing is close by, so there's no need for a substitute.
Although not to the extent of Sylphy, I won't complain about anything Rudy earnestly requests of me.
I would like to be spared from anything overly perverted though.

In any case, although I haven't known Cliff for all that long, would a devout Millis believer be happy to get something like that?
"It's a surprise present," is what Rudy had said, but I feel like he might get angry instead.
But that's not a problem I need to worry about.

"I don't think it's something you could call work. He and Cliff are especially close."
"I see. If it was I, as long as it's not something outsiders shouldn't see, I wouldn't see any reason to go out of my way to deliver it myself, I'll attribute it to a difference in common sense."

No, it really is something outsiders shouldn't see.
If it didn't come together with an excuse, there's no way Cliff would take it.

"By the way, Lillia-san, where might Aisha-san be today?"
"Aisha has gone to pay a visit to the Mercenaries, she left this morning. It seems she won't be back until this afternoon."

Aisha is with the Mercenaries.
It's just that after hearing "Ars will be in the house all day today," She abruptly decided to leave.
She probably didn't want to be in the house.
Thinking about it, after Lucy and the others said they wanted to go out, Norn and Sylphy immediately agreed and they left.
Well Norn coming along was in part due to Lucy begging to go out with her.

"It seems those children aren't so fond of this house."

Claire breathed out her nose and took a sip of tea.
Maybe she didn't like the taste, but she knit her eyebrows.
And then with a somewhat troubled look on her face, she looked Lillia in the

eyes.

“Lillia-san, when you came here last, I was quite harsh towards you.”

“...No, I do not think such at all.”

“I would like to apologise for it.

In that time, a man whose birth was unknown named himself Zenith’s husband and requested assistance from my house.

After that, when I thought they had found Zenith, another woman naming herself his wife with her daughter appeared before me, I was not feeling of good temper.”

“I can understand your mindset. I do not mind.”

“And so, I somewhat held it against Aisha.”

What’s this prickly mood.

It’s making my stomach hurt.

“But my worry was reversed. You have served the Greyrat house well. The reason Zenith has recovered to such an extent is due to your strong encouragement.

I thank you for supporting Zenith from the shadows.”

“...I am unworthy of your words. I am in no way strong.”

“You are the only one who thinks that. If you had heard what Zenith had to say yesterday you would understand. Everyone in the Greyrat house is grateful towards you.”

“ ...”

It’s true.

Rudy may not be conscious of it, but he treats Lillia the same as Zenith. Not as below her, but as an equal.

That said, Zenith is in a state which she can’t voice her gratitude.

If Lillia made the choice, she could live not as a maid, but properly as his mother.

But if that were the case, our home might not be as peaceful as it currently is, and Zenith’s treatment may not have been how it is.

It is because of Lillia, without desire, working from the shadows, that the Greyrat house is what it is today.

“You too Roxy-san.”

“Eh?”

Being suddenly addressed, I raised my head in surprise.
Claire wasn't looking at me, but at her own hands and Zenith.
And then she turned to look out the window.

“These last few days, I've been able to watch the children.
Every one of them are so lively.
Although Lara is somewhat overly mischievous, she's a good girl.”
“...Um, by any chance did she do something?”
“Yesterday morning, she gave me a frog as a present.”

I widened my eyes in surprise.
Just what is that girl doing?

“That's... Um, I'm terribly sorry. Please let me...”
“No apology is necessary. When lunch time came around I had it grilled and gave it back to her.”

I widened my eyes in surprise.
Now that I think about it, yesterday afternoon I remember seeing her eating something grilled.
But when I asked her what it was she told me it was a “Secret”...

“Of course, I had one of our chefs properly prepare it. I don't partake very often, but frog is quite a popular food around here.”

Because it rains quite often in the Millis continent, frog and lizard dishes are numerous.

During my time as an adventurer, I was quite grateful for that fact
Although there was the time before I knew detoxification magic that I almost died after eating a poisonous one...
But if they had a proper chef look at it, I'm sure they wouldn't feed Lara poison.

But that's quite surprising.
From what Rudy had told me, she was quite rigid, and wouldn't be the kind of person to do something like that.

“This morning she had told me “That snack yesterday was delicious, I will certainly repay this.”

I don't have a clue what her intentions are in repaying me..."

Is she criticising her?

Her tone is sharp as always, and there isn't a hint of a smile on her face. She's criticising her isn't she.

"Haa."

Claire let out a sigh.

It seems she's getting to the main topic.

"I don't know what has you so stiff, but Rudeus-san has told me that I am not to meddle in your family.

I do have some things I would like to say, but I intend to keep my promise."

When she says it like she's scolding me, I'm really not convinced.

"The reason why I have called the two of you here today is because, compared to the others, you two are the most mature.

Slyphiette-san is still young, and Eris-san is still immature.

I don't know how Zenith was before, but now, she isn't someone that needs to be cared for by others.

What I wish is for the two of you to take a step back and have a good look.

And so... *Cough Cough*..."

Claire had a coughing fit and the nearby maids ran over.

I stood up and prepared to cast detoxification magic.

But Claire shooed the maids away saying it was nothing and resumed drinking her tea.

"I'm fine, I just choked... Hmm?"

Claire was looking at Zenith.

She had just been looking at air seemingly oblivious to the conversation around her.

But she had stood without Lillia's incitement and was facing Claire with her vacant eyes.

"Should you not rest?"

Lillia had said it, but it almost sounded as if it had come from Zenith.

“Really, I simply choked a little and you’re causing such a fuss. Everyone is surprised when they see me with a cane... My back may be gone, but my mind is as sharp as ever. You too Zenith, stop making that face and sit down.”

Hearing her mention Zenith’s face, I took another look at her. It was the same blank expression. I looked at Claire quizzically, but she also looked surprised.

For now, I’ll return to my own seat. Zenith, by Lillia’s hand, was also back in her seat.

“ ... ”

Silence once again flowed. Claire’s surprised expression gradually returned to normal. But it seemed like she still wasn’t quite calm on the inside yet.

“...When she first stepped into the aristocracy.”

Claire once again started talking.

“When Zenith first attended a noble party, on the way out I lost my footing on a staircase and fell.”

Her tone had gotten emotional. Before I knew it, Claire’s gaze had fell. Something like sobbing had gotten mixed into Claire’s voice.

“It was no large injury. It was quickly mended with healing magic... But for some reason, I can clearly remember Zenith’s face at the time.”

Something came dripping out of Claire’s sunken face. She picked up the handkerchief by her side and wiped around her eyes.

“Zenith’s reputation was excellent, I was so proud. I, never once thought, I raised her wrong...”

Claire’s shoulders were shaking. And I, not knowing what to say, simply stared at her.

“ ... ”

I suddenly thought.

My thoughts on the children's futures.

I married Rudy, I gave birth to Lara and Lily.

I would leave the children to the family and teach at the Magic University.

Sylphy, Lillia and the like would look after the children at home, and I would look after them when they enrolled in the school.

It was a fulfilling life.

But I hadn't given any thought to the idea on how to raise them.

Lara was the daughter I gave birth to, but compared to Lucy she was quite mischievous, and it had me worried.

Was it because I was of a Magic race, was it because she was half human, I worried about all kinds of things.

But before I knew it I had spent years worrying and she had already grown up.

She wasn't particularly cut off from the other children, and was quite close with Ars and Sieg.

She'll calm down when she gets older.(i)

That's what I thought. I was the same.

But I hadn't really thought of anything past that.

Lara has the role of 'Saviour' placed upon her, but I don't entirely understand what that's supposed to mean.

I knew she would participate in the fight against Hitogami, but what about after that?

Right, after the fight, life still continues.

Honestly, I thought worrying over it was pointless...

"I apologise for my loss of composure."

"Don't mind it."

"One shouldn't be crying at my age."

Claire, with her eyes still red, returned her handkerchief to the table.

She also cried yesterday, at the Miko's reenactment of Zenith's story.

"Ahem.

In the Holy Millis Nation, there is a saying that a broken house raises broken children.

I am also in agreement with that opinion.”

Claire said that and took a strong look at us.

“The children of the Greyrat house are all healthy and in no way warped. I would also never call Zenith warped. But, from here on out, you should be careful. On the chance that any abnormalities appear, you would be the first to notice.”

Abnormality.
Like when Zenith decided to go out on her own.

It’s certainly possible.
Especially Lara. I can never tell just what she’s thinking.

No, it might not be Lara.
Maybe because she had been raised so meticulously, Lucy would be at the most risk.

At school she’s a dedicated scholar...
Would I find some abnormality?
Uh... Just thinking about it makes my head hurt.

“I called you here today to tell you just that.”

Claire leaned deeply back into her chair.
Lillia and I exchanged glances.
In response to my bewilderment, Lillia looked at Claire with determination.

“I understand. You may leave it to me.”

She looks like a soldier just entrusted with an important mission.
She can probably say that because she has confidence in the way she raised Norn and Aisha.
Oh, Rudy too.

“I will also do what I can.”

I also said that.
It’s not because I have confidence.
As a teacher I’ve seen all kinds of people,
But I still don’t think I’m qualified for it.

But through Eris and Sylphy's guidance, I hope I can provide a new path for anyone who strays.

If it's that much, I can manage.

I have to.

But that's not all there is to it.

Although Claire has her own viewpoint, I have to look at it objectively.

She's from the Demon Expulsion Faction, so her opinions ought to reflect that.

I want to be able to respond to her request, even though she thinks little of me as the Magic Race I am.

"Hmm?"

The door to the room opened.

A white dog walked into the room.

And of course, on top of it was Lara.

Lara was, for some reason, covered in mud.

Both her shoes and clothes.

Even though I've told her so many times to not walk into the house with dirty shoes.

"Lara, don't ride Leo inside."

Lara looked annoyed about it, but she still got off him.

I don't tell her very often around the house, but I feel like it's been working as of late.

Even at school, whenever I take my eyes off her, she's always on him.

I feel like sighing.

Lara just slowly walked up to Claire.

"Hi-Baachan, I found something cool."

"What is it?"

"This."

Lara reached into her pocket and pulled out some round gold object.

I couldn't see it well from where I was sitting, but it looked like a necklace of some kind.

Claire was amazed when she saw it.

“Where did you find this?”

“The garden; lost. Hi-Baachan you’ve been looking for it right?”

“Yes, for quite a while now... But, how?”

“Ba-chan said: “Even though you were always wearing it; you probably ruined your back bent over searching for it””

Lara looked at Zenith and said that.

That wasn’t something the Miko had said the other day.

Lara probably heard it herself maybe yesterday or this morning.

“And you went to find it for me?”

“As thanks for the snack yesterday.”

“ ... ”

“It was delicious, but those are better as snacks.”

Lara shifted her attention to the table.

She’s looking at the cakes that came out with the tea.

“You can eat them if you want.”

“Rub a dub dub, thanks for the grub.”¹

Lara grabbed one and put it straight into her mouth.

With both explosiveness and agility, in an instant she had cleared the table.

I at least wanted to tell her to wash her hands first.

“Ah.”

She ate mine too.

“ ... ”

Well I don’t really mind.

If I ask Rudy I can have sweets whenever I want...

I won’t get mad at a child for stealing my food.

But my...

“Ahhh~”

She looked quite satisfied as she swallowed the last bite.

Leo was astonished.

As if he was wondering where his portion was.

We're in the same boat.

"Yup, it's better than frog."

"Well then I guess I'll have to have some ready for tomorrow as well."

"Yay!"

Lara got back on Leo and headed back outside.

She had already forgot my warning not to ride Leo inside.

"Ah, um, I'm sorry she doesn't have any manners."

I apologised but Claire was focused on what Lara had brought to her.

When I got a closer look, I could see it was a gold locket.

It had a young man's picture inside.

"Carlyle gave this to me just before we were married."

"..."

"It was something far too expensive for his station at the time but he had told me: "After we are married, I will be a member of the Latrea house, and I will no longer be able to buy you something with money that is wholly my own.""

She sounds touched remembering it.

"I had lost it about a year ago, but had been bent over looking for it, my back became as such and I was forced to give up..."

The maids were also surprised by it.

Claire probably didn't tell the servants she had lost it.

"Roxy-san."

"Yes."

"There is no need to be caught up in formalities when expressing gratitude."

"...Haa."

"Lara's manners are plenty sufficient. It seems I was mistaken."

No, I don't really think Lara is that admirable of a girl.

But if she can say that, I may have been mistaken about the woman called Claire Latrea.

Rudy had been quite wary, and Aisha outright hates her.

I had been quite on guard, I wonder why.

Or perhaps she has changed since Rudy last met her.
He has an effect on all kinds of people...

In any case, I think I can get along with this person.
We haven't known each other for long, but after this visit, we may never meet again.

"Make sure that girl doesn't fall down the wrong path."
"Of course."

I nodded in response.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1. "Romantic" Written in katakana (The English Japanese alphabet) has a different meaning to the traditional love sense and refers to the older artistic, epic, adventurous meaning.
2. Originally: "Itadakimasu". If I made you laugh I have succeeded.

Chapter 17: Along The Holy Sword Highway

Part 1

Time flew by and our 10 day stay passed in the blink of an eye.

The first day was a visit to the cathedral.

We took Zenith to the Miko and she used her power to hear what she had to say.

Claire was with us too, and half way she broke down into tears.

I almost did as well, but seeing that Zenith was happy as always, I held it in.

While we were doing that the children seemed quite bored waiting outside, but we still had to meet with the Pope together with the Miko so we ended up taking quite a while.

The Miko kept bragging about her daily training routine and how slim she'd gotten and just wouldn't stop...

The kids must really have been bored out there.

Apparently Aisha took Ars, Lara, and Sieg to see the Adventurers Guild HQ.

Going by the fact that they go back so late and Ars's face when he got back, it looked like some problem had occurred...

But Aisha had probably already dealt with it.

But it didn't seem that Lucy was mad at being left behind.

She and Clive were probably satisfied looking around the Cathedral together.

She might have liked the gardens or maybe Clive's tour was quite entertaining.

And seeing that Lucy wouldn't tell me the details it was probably the latter.

If I pressed it I might have gotten it out of her, but I held back.

In any case, I'd like for Clive-kun to continue to be sincere.

The second, third, and fourth days were spent giving various greetings.

Letting people know that the Dragon God's subordinate was in Millishion.

The Holy Knight Captain.

Various members of the Latrea family. And of course among them was my aunt

Therese. She's unfortunately still unmarried.

After that was the formal audience with the Pope...

I met with the Millis Royal Family.

The 5th Royal Prince. And although he was a prince he was over forty.

It was a real pain, but I eventually managed to secure an audience with the King in several days time.

For a greeting as the representative of the Dragon God.

Orsted had said, "It's fine if you put off making relations with the Millis Royal Family," but I asked him before and a simple greeting was fine.

I don't know why he said that after hearing that we were going there for a holiday, but the original purpose was show the kids different parts of society. I myself didn't see any problem.

On the fifth day we delivered the doll to Cliff.

When we got there he had some good news for us.

In the last five years he seemed to be evaluated quite highly and they were considering his promotion to Bishop.

Normally that would be impossible as young as he is, but I'm sure there's some kind of ulterior motive.

The parish Cliff is in charge of is in a particularly special location.

The southernmost point of the Great Forest.

When I went through it while traveling, it wasn't a particularly important place. But it seems that in the last 10 years the scope of the place has increased along with the number of people.

The city isn't affiliated with any particular country or race, but when places get larger like that, people are bound to be interested.

And so, various representatives of different races have gathered there to decide all kinds of things.

The Millis Church's representative is an Archbishop known as the Cardinals' Dagger and part of the Demon Expulsion Faction.

He follows the Human Supremacy Doctrine, so not only is he against the Magic Races, but the Beast Races too. He's a disdainful man, but he's good at his job. I'm sure he's working to assure all kinds of things are in his interests.

But considering his personality, putting him there could cause problems with their relationship with the Great Forest.

But there are some especially extreme groups among the Demon Expulsion faction that welcome such a turn of events.

And so that's why Cliff was chosen.

Because of his relationship with the Rudo Mercenaries who employ a number of beast races and one of the Beast Race Princesses.

He was well connected, possessed no prejudice and he was of the pope faction. So they raised his rank and gave him the job of overseer.

Cliff seemed disappointed that he wasn't chosen purely for his ability. But regardless, after he finishes his work in the city, he'll be a Bishop in both name and rank.

Once he becomes a bishop, his influence will increase, and if he can gain favour with the Elves of the Great Forest, the church may stand for him taking one as a wife.

If that happens he'll be able to invite Elinalise and Clive to Millis.

And after hearing that much I was like "Then here's your promotion gift!" And took out the doll, but he got super mad. Apparently if they knew he was with a woman at this time, it would be a big fuss.

That said, he didn't completely outlaw the doll, so I think he might have been happy with the idea.

He seemed quite curious as to the details of its Magic Formation.

Well if it comes down to it we can always put some sunglasses on it and dress it as a man, like Sylphy suggested.

It has the strength to act as a bodyguard so I'm sure it would be helpful for Cliff in his line of work.

There's no guarantee that that Archbishop won't try to assassinate him.

Incidentally, when I returned that day, Claire was in quite a good mood. Apparently Lara found her locket that she had lost a year ago. It's a good story.

A parent loves to boast about their kids.

...Although Leo was probably the one doing the searching.

And Roxy's child raising motivation seemed to have increased.

“All the children will be at school soon, so I’m going to have to properly watch over them,” she said.

Roxy’s cute but she’s the type to worry too much when she’s enthusiastic about something so I’m a little worried.

Also, apparently Sylphy and Norn took Lucy and Clive to the Adventurers Guild.

Lucy talked about how wonderful their lunch was with a massive smile plastered over her face.

It seemed like she wasn’t that interested in the guild itself.

On the sixth and seventh days we walked around with no particular goal. We went shopping and took the kids sightseeing.

We took a carriage out of the city to look around, we stopped at a nearby farm, we let the kids play in the river we came across.

We basically just did whatever we felt like.

The ninth day was the audience with the King.

The Millis King was a mild old man.

In Millis the Church holds most of the power so the Royal family is comparatively weak.

And because of my connections with the church, the meeting was simply a formality.

I would have liked to show the castle to the children, but I held myself back on that one.

...Well it couldn’t be helped.

Because we could say that we enjoyed Millishion to the limit.

Part 2

It’s now the tenth day.

Time for us to leave Millishion.

We’ll head north through the Blue Dragon Mountain Range towards the hot springs.

“There aren’t any monsters until we reach the entrance to the Great Forest, but I hear there are a lot of ruffians near the town stops.

Just you alone would be one thing, but to bring children along too, you'll should be a bit more careful..."

Right before we left, Claire gave us a good mouthful. When I was here last, she was reprimanding me for all kinds of things, but when we first arrived she didn't say much, now, by the tenth day, she seems to have no problem scolding us. Although she's not unpleasant about it. She probably finally managed to get a feel of the distance between us.

But right before we left, she turned to face Norn.

"Norn-san, this time around we didn't talk all that much, but would it be alright if I said just one thing to you?"

"...Yes."

Norn had "Here it comes," written all over her face. She's been trying her best to avoid Claire these past 10 days. Even in spite of Ruijerd telling her to treasure her relatives... But Norn couldn't be blamed. If they were to talk, Claire might end up bad mouthing Ruijerd. And if that happened, I'm sure Norn would fight back in turn. Claire's quite stubborn, so I'm sure she wouldn't take back anything she said and it's quite possible it could turn into a massive ordeal.

"You are no longer a Latrea or a Greyrat."
"Yes."

In that instant, Norn's expression was extremely aggressive. She probably expected something unfavourable about being a Demon's wife. That's just how sharp Claire's words were. Even I had a premonition that something bad was going to happen.

"You are now the wife and mother of the Sperdia Family. Be aware of that and work yourself to the bone for your husband."
"Eh?"

But what Claire followed up with was something quite sensible. It did sound somewhat like an order though...

“I am not knowledgeable of Demon customs but is it a wife’s duty to protect their children and house, I’m sure that hasn’t changed.”

“...”

“Do you understand?”

“Ah... Yes!”

Norn looked quite shocked but she eventually meekly nodded.

Claire then nodded in satisfaction.

As if a weight was lifted from her shoulders.

I feel like Claire has changed in these last 10 days.

Maybe because of that, Roxy and Lillia could spend their last few days here relaxing.

Something probably happened in the time I was away.

Especially Claire and Roxy. They seem much closer compared to when they just met.

She’s probably happy Claire wasn’t discriminating against her.

Roxy’s had more than enough of that in her time after all.

And thanks to that, Norn probably managed to get over a little of her ill feelings.

...Aisha is the same as ever though.

Part 3

After about half a day’s travel from Millishion, we arrived at the entrance to the Blue Dragon Mountain Range.

We stopped the carriage and got the children off.

And then we turned around.

“...”

A spectacle opened up before us.

You could see the City of Millishion in the distance.

The river flowing through the city, green as far as the eye can see.

We spent 10 days there.

The Brilliant white Royal Palace, the glittering gold Cathedral, and the Sparkling

silver Adventurers Guild.

It's the same view I saw together with Eris and Ruijerd 20 years ago. Although the small building and the people living there might be different, seeing it like this makes it seem like nothing's changed.

"What do you think?"

This kind of massive scenery is something you can see quite often in this world, but I would bet there's no other place that you could walk around in and then look at it from a distance like this. It gives a kind of indescribable feeling.

I stopped thinking to myself and turned around to check the children's reactions.

"Wow~!"

They were quite varied.

Lucy had a smile of honest admiration. She's been acting more and more like the eldest sister lately, but she's still quite childish in this aspect.

...Oh, Clive next to her seems to be debating to himself whether or not to grab her hand.

But he didn't get far before Lucy turned and smiled at him. "It's amazing!" she said, before Clive blushed and threw out "It's not all that great."

He's so cute...

Just watching them makes me feel more relaxed.

I remember when I was doing things like that... Wait, did I? I have a feeling I didn't.

Oh, and Cliff is with us this time around.

He's going to be with us until we get to the post town where he's going to be inspecting his new church.

Although that's just the official excuse.

He had managed to convince the Pope to let him spend some time with Elinalise.

“...I wanna live here some day. It’s full of sweets.”

Lara stared sleepily for a couple seconds and said that.

I had heard from Roxy in the carriage just before, but apparently Claire was pampering Lara quite a bit.

Claire would prepare sweets for her every day, and she spent each one with a smile of bliss on her face.

She does seem somewhat more plump compared to when we got here.

It seems she was silently living in sweets paradise.

“Hey, Papa and Red Mama came here a while back right?”

“Yeah, but I was a little older than you are now.”

“Hmm...”

Ars nodded and clenched his fist.

He’s probably thinking of becoming an adventurer in the future.

“Hey, Hey, Mama! That’s the Nicholas River! And over there is the forest where the goblins live!”

“That’s right. Do you know what that one is?”

“That one... It’s the Gate of Triumph! The Gate of Triumph is where Saint Millis returned after the war!

That’s why it’s bigger than the rest!”

“That’s right. You sure do know a lot.”

Sieg was pointing at everything he could see, assaulting Roxy with one question after another.

Alek has been telling him stories of all kinds of adventurers so he’s oddly well informed.

He seems even more likely than Ars to get into adventuring.

“Papa, pick me up.”

Chris walked up to me and held her hands up.

“...Do you not understand them?”

“Yea...”

After I picked her up, as if she had no interest in the scenery, she buried her face in my shoulder.

Chris is cute as always.

“...”

Lily also got Sylphy to pick her up, and was playing with a Magic Tool we bought in the streets the other day.

She doesn't seem all that interested either.

It's probably a bit too early for these two.

I guess that's pretty normal.

Or maybe Lucy and the others who can be honestly impressed with the scenery just mature faster.

“...It sure brings me back.”

Eris was next to me before I even realised.

“Back then, I never would have thought we'd end up like this.”

Eris looked over Millishion as if she were embracing it.

Her red hair was fluttering in the wind.

She's still young, but she'd graduated from childhood into a beautiful woman.

“What did you think would happen?”

“...I thought, we'd end up with something more simple.”

Our lives really aren't that simple.

Eris doesn't think too hard about many things, but it's not like she doesn't put thought into anything.

Although she's calmed down after giving birth to two children, time changes people.

“I love you Rudeus.”

Eris suddenly looked me in the eyes and said that.

She's making my heart race.

What do I do. Right now, My face is probably bright red.¹

“I love you too Eris.”

I managed to calm myself down and say that, and Eris leaned on me slightly. This would be my chance to get my hands on Eris, but unfortunately, they're holding something else important.

Instead I thought to just tickle Chris and she quickly began to giggle.

“Papa, no tickling.”

“Whoops, sorry.”

“You won’t tickle?”

“I won’t, I promise.”

Eris began to giggle at our exchange and kissed me on the cheek. She then kissed Chris on the forehead and turned to the others.

“I guess it’s about time we got moving.”

After she said that, we headed back for the carriage.

Part 4

In the valley that divides the Blue Dragon Mountain Range. On the proverbial ‘handle’ of the Holy Sword Highway. The cliffs rise up straight from the ground, with only the occasional rock jutting out, producing a gloomy valley as far as the eye can see.

The children were quite excited when they first saw it. Even Lara let one of her rare “Wow,”s slip. The adventure has begun. From here on out, we have no idea what we might come across. Will we see monsters? I had heard that there was a Blue Dragon somewhere near here, but will we get a chance to see it...?

Our hopes were destroyed after a few days.

The scenery never changed. Because it’s not the right season, there were no dragons. And of course, we didn’t see any monsters. The valley just continued on endlessly. The children were over it within three days.

Lara didn’t even try to hide it and would just shout “I’m bored!” repeatedly. Occasionally she would say “I’m walking Leo,” leave the Carriage, and go off somewhere on top of him. If she finds a gap she might even be able to climb the cliff.

Ars, Sieg and Clive didn't say anything, but you could see the delight on their faces whenever the carriage stopped and they could practice their combat with Eris, or have mock battles with each other, or practice magic with Roxy. We wasted our days away in the rocking carriage.

Chris was crying "We're trapped!" and Lily had already disassembled the magic toy she had gotten only a few days prior.

The only quiet one was Lucy, who was still reading the book she had gotten from the Latrea house.

I hope she doesn't get motion sick reading on a carriage.

The carriage was in constant pandemonium. We all worked together to try to pacify the kids... But this is the first time they've been out after all, so maybe we should have stopped by some more interesting places. Although there is the matter of safety.

That said. It's precisely because they were so over it, that when we got to the post town, they were overwhelmed with excitement.

"We're heeeeeeeere!"

The second they saw the town at the end of the valley, Ars, Sieg, and Lara all jumped straight out of the carriage.

"Don't go running off!"

Eris and Sylphy chased after them. Ars and Sieg got caught by the scruff of the neck, but Leo managed to slip away and climb onto a rock some way up the cliff. That said, there's no reason to panic. The Holy Sword Highway is a relatively safe place.

"Lara! We're all sticking together until we get to the inn!"

Eris's shout was oddly restless. She was also quite bothered being cooped up in the carriage. She's much more mature and calm than she used to be, but you can't change a person's true nature.

Eris has never been someone able to sit around for a long period of time.

Ars and Sieg reluctantly returned to the carriage.

But Lara didn't.

She stared at the forest that opened up endlessly before her.

"Lara, come back."

Lara turned around to look at Sylphy but Leo didn't move.

She looked at both Sylphy and Leo, got off his back, and tapped him a couple times.

But seeing that he still didn't move, she looked somewhat troubled.

Sylphy, no longer able to wait, began to walk up to them.

But the second she reached out to Leo, Lara stepped in between them.

"Wait."

"You can look at it all you want tomorrow, so let's go."

"This is Leo's first time seeing his home like this, wait a little."

"I see..."

Sylphy looked like she didn't know what to do and looked towards me.

I'd like to let him look, a little more, but right now we're moving together.

I'd like to get going quickly to keep the children from exploding.

What to do... Even if Leo is with her, there's no way I can let them catch up by themselves.

Sylphy's probably thinking the same.

I got off the carriage and walked up to them.

"I'll bring them back, so you go on ahead."

"...Ok. Come find us before it gets dark."

Sylphy took me on my word, nodded, and headed back towards the carriage.

I sat down on the rock next to Leo.

And Lara sat down next to me.

The three of us in a line, overlooking the Great Forest.

Although it's a relatively flat and straight road, because it passes through a mountain, we have a good view from above.

A brown line cuts through green as far as the eye can see.

It's kind of magnificent.

Thinking back on it, last time I was here, I never even turned around to take a look...

"Lara?"

"Yeah?"

"Does Leo miss it?"

"...It doesn't, seem like it."

Doesn't seem like it, huh.

"Huh..."

"..."

Then I wonder what he's feeling.

Since I'm not Bowlingual I can't tell, but the one that is, doesn't speak all that much.²

I don't want to ask her too much so I don't make her feel like an interpretation machine.³

Whatever, I'll change the topic.

"Lara?"

"Yeah?"

"I was going to tell you when you turned 10, but when you get older, you're supposed to go to the Dorudia village for some kind of ritual at their Holy Tree."

"I know, I heard."

"From who?"

"Leo."

From the Holy Beast himself huh.

"You know Pursena right?"

"Aisha-nee's dog."

That's a harsh rating.

Although she's not wrong.

"You'll go together with her."

Lara looked somewhat puzzled at that.

“...Papa won't come too?”

“I'd like to, but it's one of the Beast Race's special rituals so Humans might not be allowed.”

Or is she thinking something else?

Does she not want her Papa to come because it's embarrassing?

Although I think she's still a bit young for her rebellious phase...

And then Leo looked at me.

“Woof.”

“...Leo says it's not a problem.”

She's probably talking about me coming along.

Since she took the trouble to translate for me... I guess that means she's not against the idea.

That said, when she gets older, she'll probably find every reason she can to dislike me.

Don't wash my clothes with your underwear! Or something like that.

Chris is still saying things like “I'll marry Papa when I grow up,” but i'm sure that'll change when she gets a little older.

“Papa.”

“Hmm?”

“It's alright, you can look forward to it.”

“...Thanks, I guess I will.”

I don't know what I should be looking forward to, but for now I'll agree.

Lara returned my nod looking satisfied and stood up.

Is it time to go now?

But right as I was about to get up,

“Whou...!”

Something suddenly landed on my shoulders.

But when I saw the tiny shoes in my field of vision, I knew that Lara had climbed onto me.

“Carry me.”

“...Am I Leo's replacement now?”

“I want to be pampered by Papa.”

So it’s like that.
Well then, I guess I shall oblige.
Rudeus-san spoils his daughters.

“ARH-WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO”

As I stood up, Leo howled.
The sound rang far through the Great Forest.



Translator Notes and References

1. Ok, these lines sound way out of place in english.
But it’s actually a joke on Rudeus’s part.

“Doki Doki Shichau.
Doushimashou. Tabun, ima, atashi no kao, makka wa.”

The is a super cliché line that a shoujo heroine would think to themselves after being confessed to.

The tone is super effeminate and he even uses ‘Atashi’ the most effeminate of pronouns.

2. This joke was legit there in the Japanese.
バウリンガル — Bowlingual (Bow wow the dog noise combined with Bilingual)
It refers to this gimmick product that claims to translate barks into Japanese and Rudy refers to Lara as one.

It literally says: “Since I don’t have a Bowlingual I can tell, but ours doesn’t really speak all that much.”

3. Hey! What’s wrong with that. I’m offended [Sarcasm]
While I’m here I’d like you guys to give the Editor, King of the End, a thank. He’s been with me since nearly when I took over and he’s saved me hours of having to read over my work multiple times. He’s been doing (almost) thankless work for a while now and he’s still always there ready and happy to help. So ket him know he’s appreciated.

Chapter 18: Hot Springs

Part 1

When you think of mountains, hot springs come to mind.

After that, we arrived in the post town, and after pushing our way through the swarms of Beast Races' gathering to meet Leo, we arrived at our inn. After taking a quick stroll through the town, we met up with our guide, Talhand. And after the children fell asleep, we had an adult-only meeting in the tavern.

After our stay at the inn, we set out first thing in the morning. Following Talhand's directions, we arrived at the hot springs.

We had heard that Monsters appear around the hot springs, but it was much closer than I thought.

You can see from the rockface the other day meets the milky white of the hot springs.

The entire area was surrounded by a large stone wall to keep the Monsters out. And if you look down in the direction we climbed up, you can see the post town in the distance.

In other words, it's an open air bath with a superb view.

And of course, it's a mixed bath.

But there really aren't many people here.

There aren't even any Humans.

If you look around, it's almost entirely Dwarves and Hobbits, with the occasional Beast Race.

Hot springs probably aren't all that popular with Humans or Elves.

In Human culture, baths like this are usually the things of Nobility.

Well then, there aren't many people.

And there are no Humans.

That said, there are men.

There are men and women.

Showing my beloved wives' and daughters' naked bodies to unknown men is a

good thing.

Wait, no it's not.

Especially this time, because it's not just *my* wives.

Elinalise is here too.

Even if she used to be your friendly neighbourhood adventuring stripper, I will find pleasure in seeing another man's sexy Elf wife naked.

Wait, that's not right.

And so, with that in mind, I have prepared a special kind of bathrobe.

It's a Kantoui Made of a dark fabric.¹

It has no particular resistances, but it's made to feel natural like a swimsuit when wearing it.

The designer is Aisha Greyrat.

"Aisha-nee, they have a waterfall over there!"

"Huh? Were?"

"Look, it's over there, there."

"Aah, wait Mama."

Aisha, along with Eris, Ars, and Sieg all seem excited to be in a hot spring for the first time, and are exploring their new environment.

The dark black fabric isn't see through, but it does cling, making the figure completely visible.

And they're moving all over generously exposing it.

Eris probably hasn't noticed so that's fine... And Aisha probably doesn't even care.

Well whatever.

This is a place anyone can enter.

As long as the important places are hidden it's fine.

Let those who are embarrassed be so.

Although I do hope they don't cause trouble for anyone else here.

Even here, there are manners that are necessary.

"Hey Blue Mama, you've been here before haven't you?"

"Yes, it was a long time ago."

"Tell us!"

“Sure. It was right after I had left the Magic Continent, around the time I had just graduated from being a beginner Adventurer...”

Roxy was telling a story to Lucy with Lily in her arms.
Clive was also listening in nearby.
Clive’s face was bright red, probably because of Lucy’s state of dress.
But it’s too early for you to know those kinds of feelings Clive-kun.
Your father, nor I, will permit it at such an age.

“...And so Holy Beast-sama, this is the Saviour-sama?”
“Ruff!”
“I see!”
“ ...”

Lara and Leo were surrounded by Beast Races’
Lara has her usual bold expression, but she looks somewhat bothered.
It was like this in the post town as well.

“Chris-sama, If you get hot, please say. I will prepare you something to drink.”
“Kaaay~...”

Lillia was washing Zenith and looking after Chris.
She was sitting with me before but she didn’t like the hot water so she quickly got out.
Now she’s clinging to Zenith.
Well, that’s fine.

“...Aaaah! This is the best...!”
“This is the first time I’ve drank Dwarf liquor. It’s pretty strong... But it’s good.”

And Sylphy, Elinalise, Cliff, Talhand, and I are all drinking together.
We bought some Dwarven liquor in the post town and chilled it.
I’ve never tasted anything like it before, I don’t even know what it’s made of, but I do know that it’s good.
It goes down smoothly and as it passed your throat, gives a soft scent of flowers.
The cold penetrates your body and slowly warms you up from the inside.

“Rudy, come on, give it here. Give me a drink? Come on...”

Sylphy got drunk real quick and now she's snuggling up to me somewhat dazed.

Drunk Sylphy is as cute as ever.

So cute that you'd never expect she's a mother of two.

This isn't something to show the children.

"Right, of course."

Soaking in a hot spring, with an arm around a beautiful girl drinking together. This is the best.

I'm in paradise.

"..."

At least I should be...

"..."

But something's been giving me shivers.

"..."

I already know the cause.

The man quietly drinking in front of me.

Talhand.

A former member of Paul's old party『Black Wolf's Fang』.

An S rank Adventurer currently working solo.

A capable and trustworthy man.

"..."

I have no reason to doubt him.

If he does something I can deal with it.

And I did conduct a comprehensive interview to determine if he was Hitogami's apostle.

Although there was the case with Gisu.

He calmly lied through his teeth and did whatever he wanted.

So although I can't be sure, if I start thinking like that, I won't be able to trust anyone.

I have already decided to trust Talhand.

But why.
His gaze gives me chills.

The journey to the hot spring was the same.
We were protecting the carriage the children were riding in.
Eris was the vanguard, Elinalise and I were the front with Talhand right behind us and Sylphy and Roxy were behind the carriage.
I was using earth Magic to make the carriage ride smoother but I kept getting those chills.
and whenever I looked back, Talhand was staring at me.

Well it should be obvious that since he was right behind me, and we were walking in the same direction, that when I turn around he'd be looking at me.
I was probably just nervous walking along a known Monster path with the children.
I'm just overthinking it...

But I just can't understand why his gaze gives me chills.

"Um, what is it?"

And before I knew it, I had asked him that.

"What is what?"

"I get the feeling you've been staring at me a while.

"Aah... Of course. You much resemble Paul. I have been observing."

"My father?"

"Yes, with you walking in line with Elinalise, it brings back memories of old. The back's of Elinalise, Ghislaine and Paul, Gisu and Zenith's voice behind... I am reminded of my days in the『Black Wolf's Fang』."

Talhand looks engrossed in pleasant memories as he strokes his beard.
I can't see my own back, so I don't really understand, but is that how it is.
But then, what are the chills I've been feeling.
Odd.

"Rudeus, I'd be careful if I were you, this Dwarf will drink up men too."
"Eeh."

Elinalise said that with her head on Cliff's shoulder.

Talhand looked somewhat sullen at her remark.

“Don’t say things in such a way that will cause misunderstandings.”

Right.

What will I do with Elinalise-san.

Can she think anything remotely pure?

This damn dirty Elf.

“I take men only.”

This dirty Dwarf!

Wait...

That means the chill I felt...

He’s aiming for me!?

I-if you lay your hands on me, Eris won’t stay quiet!

She’ll chop you in two!²

But then Sylphy tremblingly grabbed hold of me.

And as if to protect me, gave Talhand a stern look.

“Rest easy, I won’t lay a hand on someone without interest, let alone a married man.”

So he does have his morals intact.

Well I guess that’s obvious.

He may be like that, but that just means his preferences are slightly different.

When you think about it that way, it’s perfectly normal.

“But you’ve been staring at his ass this whole time haven’t you?”

“It’s in a man’s nature to appreciate fine buttocks... You understand nay?”

Talhand looks somewhat troubled at Elinalise’s inability to stop talking.

Of course, I understand what he’s talking about.

I’ve been staring at Eris’s ass as she walks around too.

Aah, Eris is looking this way.

She couldn’t have felt the chills too right?

Aah, she hid her chest! She knows!

But you’re hiding the wrong place! I wasn’t looking at your breasts, but your ass!³

“Your resemblance to Paul is genuine... But if you possess some aversion to it, I shall cease.”

“Not really, if you’re just looking, go ahead.”

“Hoho, then I shall take you up on that.”

Talhand said that with a smile on his face and took another swig.

“How about another?”

“I think I will.”

People have all kinds of tastes.

If the other party has their morals in check, there’s no need to be any more wary than normal.

It’s no big deal having him ogle me.

Well, Talhand is built like a bear, so I don’t really think I have anything to compare to though.

“But still, I never thought you would agree to be our guide.”

Elinalise suddenly said that.

“I don’t understand your meaning.”

“I mean, I thought you were avoiding going back to your home town.

This hot spring is in Dwarf territory isn’t it?

Won’t it be a problem for you if someone you know spots you?”

It seems there are some circumstances behind Talhand’s past.

Now that I think about it, among Paul’s ex-party members, he’s the one I know the least about.

Well I guess the fact that I wasn’t all that interested played a part.

“...Hah. That’s rich coming from the woman who claimed it to be impossible for her to stick to one man.”

“Life can change people.”

“I think the same. It was a good opportunity, so I thought I would settle it.”

“Oh, how manly.”

“I need not your flattery. After seeing all of you, I simply thought it pathetic to have avoided my family for decades.”

Talhand said that with an unpleasant look on his face and took another swig.

“Does that mean you’ll be going back to your village?”

“Essentially.”

“Rudeus, go ahead.”

Hearing my name called, I turned around.

It took me a second to realise what she meant.

She probably realised that it would be a good opportunity for me.

But I am with my family right now, would it be a good idea to ask?

Well getting an answer now should be fine.

“Actually, I had the intention to make contact with the Ore God...”

“The Ore God?”

“Yes, or someone of that level of influence... I would like to extend an official greeting as the subordinate of the Dragon God.”

I don’t know what kind of standing Talhand has in his village.

Asking something like this might even get him in trouble.

So I can only hope.

“Hmm... He’s a very hard person to please.”

Orsted said the same thing.

That he’s hard to please and hard to like.

The only things he likes are liquor, gems and raw materials that can be made into armour.

But simply gifting him a bunch of that, wouldn’t be enough to make an alliance.

“Even if I ask, you might get turned down.”

“Do you know him?”

“Somewhat...”

Talhand nodded while pondering.

They might be related.

When I get back I’ll have to ask Orsted about it.

“I won’t ask you to force anything, there are probably many things you have to consider after all.”

“That’s quite true...”

He took another drink in thought and let out a breath reeking of alcohol.

“I will think about it.”

“I understand. I apologise for asking something unreasonable.”

As I was about to bow to him, he pointed the top of the bottle at me.

“Don’t apologise, just drink,” is what he seemed to be telling me.

I obeyed his command and held out my cup.

Part 2

After we got out of the bath, we headed back to our rooms.

After that we had the rest of the family wait in the inn as Roxy, Talhand, Elinalise, and I went to look for somewhere to install the Teleport Formation.

We only took those used to walking through mountains.

Eris wanted to come too, but I had her stay back as a guard.

And so the four of us entered the mountain.

It was just past the inn.

Somewhere people don’t come across often is ideal for a Teleport Formation.

Ariel once told me that the majors powers want to have Teleport Gates connecting them and they’re currently making plans for it...

But that’s still quite far off.

Lifting the taboo on Teleport Magic.

Until we know that it’s a real possibility, I’ll still have to keep putting my personal Formations where people can’t find them.

If we go too high we’ll be in Blue Dragon territory, so we still have to keep it within reachable range.

“I guess about here’s fine...”

Now that we’ve found somewhere to set it up, it’s time to make a building.

It’s basically made the same as a Dragon Race relic.

Four rooms with a hidden staircase in one leading to the Teleport Formation.

I’ve left Roxy and Elinalise outside to keep watch.

I dig the hole with Earth Magic and begin forming the room.

I had Talhand help out with the specifications of the inside.

Nobody’s going to stumble across here, but the Formation lead to the office.

So in the million to one chance someone finds it, we'd be in trouble.

And so with that in mind, I dressed it up like a real ruin so any travellers that come across it leave satisfied. I even threw in something that looked like a treasure chest.

I set it up like something along the lines of a rest stop.

It should seem like somewhere ancient travellers would be able to take a break.

Talhand was the one who made the furnishings.

He certainly lives up to the Dwarves' legacy of craftsmanship.

He crafted it all from a single huge piece of stone and even made them look appropriately worn.

By the time the sun set, the building looked like it had been standing there for over a thousand years.

"It's impressive. I don't think anyone will be able to tell."

"There aren't any plants or moss. Anybody who knows what they're doing could tell right away."

Oh.

It seems the craftsman is unsatisfied with his work.

That said, I don't think anyone will come across it that quickly.

If someone does eventually stumble across it, it should look properly aged by then.

There's nobody around to clean it after all.

"Is it even alright for us to be erecting a building here? The Dwarves have sealed it off haven't they?"

"The Dwarves treat the mountain as something of a God and buildings are considered offerings. No matter what we build, nobody's going to complain."

Is that how it is?

Maybe I should have made the outside more gaudy instead of hiding it all underground.

The fact that the entrance leads underground basically screams that something fishy is going on.

Well I guess it's too late now.

"Since we're done here, we should head back."

“I’ll be there in a second.”

Finally, I activated the Formation and Teleported.
After confirming that it does in fact lead to the office, I head back.

“All good.”

“...”

“If something comes up I’d be fine with you using it too Talhand-san.”

“No thank you. I shall make due with my feet.”

Talhand shook his head and refused.

So for now, the Teleport Formation is complete.
All that’s left is to head back.

Part 3

The next day, we set out from the town early in the morning.
And here is where we parted with Cliff and Talhand.

We gave our goodbyes before getting in the carriage.
Cliff is to conduct his investigation today and return to Millishion within the next few.

“Clive, make sure you’re a good boy.”

“Of course!”

Cliff really didn’t want to say goodbye to Clive.
It’s not like they won’t see each other again.
But it’s always painful to part with family.

“Make sure too keep up with both your studies and training. Don’t make that girl you like cry. Be kind.”

“T-There’s no girl I like!”

“In that case, treat everybody as kindly as you would a girl you like. Alright?”

“...Ok.”

He gave Clive a good pat on the head and turned to me.

“Rudeus, I’ll leave Lise and Clive to you.”

“Of course. You keep at it too Cliff-senpai.”

“You bet.”

Cliff turned around as if no further words were necessary.
The fact that he doesn't need to say anything else is a testament to his faith in me.
And I plan to live up to it.
Well, Elinalise has everything pretty much together so there's not really much I can do.

I guess I'll just have to turn Clive into a great man for the day he asks for Lucy's hand.
...No it's not set in stone.
I'll just make sure to be there if they ever need help.

I walked towards Elinalise and Roxy who were talking to Talhand off to the side.
Apparently he's temporarily returning to Millishion.
There seems to be some sort of preparation necessary before returning to the Dwarf village.
Although I'm not sure if he needs to get something or prepare himself mentally.

“Talhand-san, I would like to thank you for your help.”
“Of course.”
“I wish you luck with your family and your village.”
“Having Paul's son worry about me is somewhat disturbing.”

Talhand gave me a good look.
I have a feeling he might be checking me out.

“I thought so yesterday too, but as long as you show the Ore God ‘That’ he might even be happy to meet with you.”
“‘That’?”
“The dark hard one from yesterday.”
“Eeh!?”

My hard dark what!?
Is the Ore God a homo?
Wait, I'm not that dark.
I guess I would be hard, am I? I don't have anyone to compare too.

Roxy, don't just blush, say something.

"No, it's mine," or something like that.

"Talhand if you just say his thick dark hard one, he won't understand. Be more clear."

"I didn't say thick. That one from yesterday. The big rock you made from Earth Magic. I don't know whether to call it a mineral or a crystal."

Oh the rock.

I did make a bunch of big black rocks yesterday.

I was going after toughness, so they did end up quite hard.

So he was just talking about the rock...

Oh, Roxy's face is bright red.

Hmmm? Just what were you imagining? Oh Roxy you dirty girl.

Well I was thinking the same thing though.

"If I have a sample to take with me it might help with the request."

"Sure."

I immediately conjured up a stone bar with Earth Magic.

A thick hard black one.

Of course it's quite heavy.

It's about 15cm long and probably weighs over 10kg.

If you plated it with gold you might even be able to fool someone. Although it's far harder than both gold and platinum so you'd be found out right away.

"Is this fine?"

"This is good. How many can you make?"

He eventually took five of them and after feeling out their weight, nodded.

I would think five of them would be quite heavy...

He is an experienced adventurer after all.

"Then, until the next."

Talhand gave me a nod and turned towards Roxy.

"Talhand you be carefull."

"You take care of yourself Roxy."

"Of course."

Talhand laughed.
Roxy smiled as the two friends parted.

Part 4

And so our family vacation ended without incident.
Thinking back on it, all I did was work, but it was a good trip.
I pray this was a good experience for the children and will help encourage them.
Saying it like that really doesn't suit me.
I hope they all grow up well.



Translator Notes and References

1. It refers to this piece of clothing
The closest english equivalent I can think of would probably be a poncho but I felt that didn't quite fit.
2. This could also refer to "It" ;).
The more I read the more I'm sure Rudeus is a Shoujo Heroine.
- 3.He expected Ass...

The God that Dwells in the Holy Sword Region

Chapter 19: Talhand The Clifftop

Part 1

『Talhand The Clifftop』was the 37th of 51 siblings. He was born to an ordinary Dwarf family and was constantly surrounded by his brothers and sisters.

51 of them.

Of course, they didn't all share the same mother. Something not generally known is that in the Dwarf village, all children of the same generation are all grouped together. I guess you could liken it to a school, but from the moment they are born, they are considered siblings until death. And so all the children live as siblings, any disparity in wealth is lost, and they can eventually transition smoothly into positions of responsibility within the village. And among their siblings, someone will be the chief, some will be servants, and others will marry each other.

Of course, that's simply the state of this village. Dwarves outside the village have no such custom.

Anyhow, Talhand was raised among several tens of people as siblings. He was a normal child. He was interested in rock and iron, he liked the smell of alcohol, and he admired blacksmiths and builders. The only thing that might have stood out was that he seemed to like the men more than the women.

That aside, among his siblings there was one who was particularly popular.

His little brother, the 38th of 51.

His name was『Godbard of the Splendid Heavenly Peak』.

Godbard had a particular talent.

Once Dwarf children are of age, they are taught blacksmithing and crafts, as well as simple Earth Magic.

And amongst those, Godbard far outshone the rest.

He could use the hammer to create steel as hard as the adults, he could craft ornaments splendid enough to make you doubt your eyes, and if you showed him a building, he could immediately fix its weak points.

Dwarves live longer than humans.

Around the time that Godbard's talent was discovered, there were still those who had lived through the Laplace War.

“He's the spitting image of the late Ore God,” they proclaimed.

At their recommendation he was selected as a candidate for the next Ore God and was given preferential treatment.

The other children also came to recognise him as their future leader.

It was at that point that Talhand also began to show changes.

He lost interest in smithing and crafts.

Because he knew that no matter how hard he tried, nothing he made would ever outshine Godbard.

He wasn't comparing himself to Godbard.

The adults never even looked at anything anyone other than Godbard made, so there was never even any comparison.

Did Talhand want to be number one?

No.

That wasn't it.

Then did he resent the respect shown to Godbard?

That wasn't it either.

Talhand and Godbard were quite close.

In fact, Godbard was one of his first friends.

Talhand's first love was Godbard.

When he heard that Godbard was to be the next Ore God, he was happy.

And so, Talhand thought of how he could be helpful to Godbard.
How he would make up for his deficiencies and become his right-hand man.

The conclusion he reached was Magic.
Especially, Water and Wind Magic which the Dwarves considered worthless.
The previous Ore God was was a God Class Earth Mage, and using the stone he created, produced a legendary sword.
But it's also said that the reason he was able to create such an amazing sword was because of the Water and Wind talents of the Elves.

Blacksmithing is done with more than just earth and fire.
To grow fire, you need wind. To cool steel, you need water.
It's not an incorrect philosophy, but the adults of the village refused to acknowledge it.
Tradition and formality have prevented previous generations of Dwarves from excelling at Wind and Water Magic.
They would give all kinds of reasons to prevent Talhand from learning Wind and Water Magic.
In actual fact, Talhand was far better at Earth Magic than Wind or Water.

But Godbard had said, "I think it's a great idea. Those adults' heads are too hard."

Those words gave Talhand determination and further flared his admiration of Magic.
And so Talhand separated from the norm.

And because of that, he became an object of scorn among some of his siblings.
According to them, any Dwarf who couldn't work a forge, couldn't be considered a man.
And Magic should only be used to loosen bedrock, anything used in smithing should be birthed by nature.

And under their contempt, Talhand slowly advanced his studies.
It was all for the sake of Godbard.
When he became the new Ore God, he would definitely need Talhand's strength.

That's what he believed.

Even when they criticised him, ostracised him, and he became known as an eccentric madman, he continued to believe.

And then the day arrived.

The day Godbard became the Ore God.

In accordance with the succession ritual, the Ore God must craft five swords. And for each sword he creates, he selects those he can most rely on. The Ore God himself selects his wife and friends, those who will help him lead the village in the future.

Talhand of course, nominated himself. He'd been training himself for this day. But to his surprise, Godbard didn't select him. He selected those in the village who possessed skill and his lover... And that was fine. But his last selection was one who had berated Talhand as a lunatic, a stubborn old man.

Talhand objected. "As if I could stand such foolishness, I worked this hard for you!" he said. But Godbard replied,

"Can you make an actual sword?"

And of course Talhand answered,

"Of course I can, give me a chance."

Godbard gave a bitter look, but he consented. The stubborn old man and Talhand. They would both forge a sword in competition. And to assure impartiality, Godbard proclaimed that only those he deemed worthy were to participate. They gathered from all around to join.

Talhand was baffled. He had trained his Water and Wind Magic for this moment. But since childhood, he had done very little smithing.

He could count the number of times he made a sword on his hand.

He was at a massive disadvantage.

“Wait! I wanted to help you make swords!”

And to his plea,

“Someone who can’t make their own sword, couldn’t possibly understand my design. Those who don’t understand can’t assist me.”

He was denied.

He didn’t understand.

He thought there was nobody who could understand Godbard better than himself.

So why...

And so still confused, he duelled with no plan...

And lost.

And so with eyes drilling holes in his back, he left the scene.

The next day, during the succession ceremony, Talhand left the village.

Part 2

After that, Talhand continued traveling as an Adventurer.

He was almost always alone.

After the incident with Godbard, he could no longer bring himself to trust people.

After being ostracised for so long, he had no idea how to interact with others.

And his sexual inclination didn’t help with that.

His smithery was at the base level a Dwarf should have, but the Magic that he had spent most of his time on was only at a reasonable level.

It only went as far a reasonable.

So he clad himself in armour and had no choice but to resign himself to something of a Magic Knight role.

But he still didn’t think being a solo adventurer was that difficult of a task.

When Talhand was raised to B rank, a certain person took notice of him.

Elinalise Dragonroad.

At first, she had her eyes on his body.

She felt like eating up a Dwarven youth.

But with Talhand's sexuality, he had no interest in her.

And no amount of seduction could change that.

And when he finally got tired of her advances, he told her he was gay.

Elinalise stared at him mouth agape and then proceeded to laugh.

Talhand wasn't too pleased with that.

But he knew he would be able to part ways with the lascivious Elf.

But Elinalise never left him.

He had no idea why.

Maybe she thought she could stay out of trouble by following him around.

After that the two of them teamed up a quite a number of times.

The abilities of the fast warrior Elinalise and the heavily armoured Mage

Talhand meshed well together.

He still found her irritating, but for some odd reason, it wasn't an uncomfortable sensation.

Maybe because her common sense was bound by strict rules.

Although neither of them talked about forming an official Party.

But the appearance of a single boy changed that.

Paul Greyrat.

He managed to bring together the scattered Elinalise, Talhand, Gisu and Ghyslaine and form a party.

The『Black Wolf's Fang』.

Their combination caused quite a stir, but that's a story for another time.

The members of『Black Wolf's Fang』were all those ejected from their own societies.

And although none of them matched with Talhand, they were all faithful to their desires.

Paul was especially creative in his wild thoughts.

When he heard of Talhand's preferences, he simply laughed it off and exclaimed, "So I get the women, Elinalise gets the men, and if you take

whoever's left, nobody gets wasted."

Paul was an easy to understand kid and his every action would leave you wanting to sigh.

Although it didn't seem as if he acted without restraint.

He possessed some amount of common sense.

Even when he was publicly labelled a playboy, he continued to live how he wanted as if he couldn't care less.

Paul's way of life opened Talhand's eyes.

Paul's actions gave the『Black Wolf's Fang』quite the bad reputation, but it was fun nonetheless.

Whenever Paul did something befitting of his name, he would give a hearty Dwarven laugh.

Talhand's feelings for Paul, while similar to love, were decidedly different. It was most likely faith.

For the first time in his life, he had companions he could trust.

But that trust was broken.

Zenith joining the party had destroyed his reliance on them.

Paul, who had run around uninhibited until now, began to act with common sense to conform with what Zenith expected.

You could consider it Paul growing as a person.

But Paul made one mistake right at the end.

The upheaval caused by Paul's marriage to Zenith left a scar on each of the members hearts.

In hindsight, it may have only been a small thing.

But it resolved Talhand to never join another party again.

After that, Talhand continued on alone, and before long, the Fitoa Annihilation Event occurred.

He was reunited with Elinalise, met Roxy, and together with the two of them, his aversion towards groups diminished...

But his sentiment didn't extend to Paul.

He met back up with Paul on his return from the Magic Continent.

And the man he met, was no longer the unruly child he once knew.

He was a man, a father, desperately searching for his family.

Talhand knew he had changed, that he had grown up.

He first met Paul's son in the Begarrito Continent.
Rudeus Greyrat.
He had assumed he would be some lazy arrogant brat just like his father, but he was a surprisingly dependable kid.
But seeing how Paul had matured it wasn't all that strange.

Paul and Rudeus.
Seeing the two of them caused Talhand's chest to tighten.
He didn't know why.

And then Paul died.
It was too quick of an end.
He received quite the shock.
But seeing the far greater impact it had on Rudeus, he was hesitant to let it show.
So he drank his sorrows away as calm as he always was.

After that he left the Begarrito Continent and met Paul's son's family.
The son of the flagrant womaniser Paul, had actually started his own family.
So after erecting a grave for Paul and having a drink in his honour, he left Sharia on a journey.

It was then that something inside Talhand was over.
Something that had been with him since he became an Adventurer.

Part 3

One day, in his emptiness, a thought came to Talhand.
That he should learn to blacksmith.

He couldn't tell why he thought that.
But throughout his journey towards the Asura Kingdom, he took up jobs in smithies alongside his work as an Adventurer as training.
Because of Gisu's gambling, he had lost most of his fortune.
And to earn a little more money, when he reached the Millis Continent, he took a break from his travels.

He started smithing with all of his magic at his disposal.
Fire, Earth, Water and Wind.

He made swords, he made gauntlets, he made shields, he made swords, he made armour, he made helmets, and he made swords.
And through that, he somehow began to understand what Godbard had said to him all those years ago.
Some things just can't be conveyed through words. The tempo, the timing, the force, he began to get a feel for all these things.

His skill rapidly increased.
The intricacies of Godbard's forgery were burning in his mind.
And his knowledge from his time as an adventurer about what kinds of equipment outperformed others played a big part.
The way he used Magic was far from that his village taught.

Eventually, people who would buy his wares appeared.
The Rudo Mercenaries.
Because he was acquainted with Rudeus, that branch became his sponsor.
And because of that, eventually he was able to set up his own shop.

But, as always, his actions didn't have any purpose to himself.
His part time Adventures, playing teacher to apprentices, none of it had any meaning.

What finally changed that was when Rudeus brought his entire family over from Sharia.
Paul's son, could stand on the same level as the Latria house.
When he saw that, he knew.
He finally understood.

That he had to return to his village.
That he had to overturn the decision on that day.
That's why he was smithing.

Part 4

After getting the rod of black rock from Rudeus, Talhand returned to his store.

He had always thought that if he had the ability, that was the kind of stone he would make.

What was once a dream, was now possible through all the training he had put himself through.

“ ... ”

The first step was to powderise the rock from Rudeus with hammer and Magic.

Then mix in iron sand and heat it.

And using Earth and Wind Magic to achieve temperatures unimaginable with a conventional furnace, raise the heat.

Both the Shingane and the Tamahagane¹ would be made of Rudeus's rock and the iron sand.

The ratio would be different, but the basic process the same.

He could have used Red Dragon scales or Hydra bones to produce an even stronger sword, but Talhand wouldn't use any of that.

There wouldn't be any point.

He began to slowly forge the sword, and after an entire night without rest, he began the tempering process.

Slowly but surely, he poured the epitome of his magic and willpower into the sword.

The result: a single blade.

It was a hard black sword.

It had no special decorations and no special effects.

But Talhand was satisfied. He made a scabbard, wrapped it in a first class cloth, and placed it on his back.

After putting the remaining black rocks in his bag, he set off from Millishion.

His destination: the Dwarf village.

Part 5

Even after so long, nothing had changed about the Dwarf village.

The village was built from stone at the base of a cliff.
The sound of hammering iron could be heard even through its thick stone walls.
Talhand made it through the entrance without much difficulty.
He was no longer part of the village, but he was still a Dwarf.
Dwarves regularly left and entered the village so the watch wasn't particularly mindful.

“ ... ”

In the side of the cliff there was a huge hole and out of it came a system of pulleys.
Half naked men drenched in sweat carried coal and ore out from the mine and the women brought massive sacks of steamed potatoes on both shoulders to the rest stop near the outside.
Talhand felt a sense of nostalgia at the sight.
As if time had been frozen from the moment he left the village.

The only thing that had changed was the number of people he didn't recognise.
Although he drew some quizzical gazes walking about, the amount that looked at him with disdain were few.
Most of them didn't know him or didn't think anything of him.
Talhand didn't let any of that bother him and headed straight for the Patriarch's residence.
he only had one aim.

“...It's been some time『Clifftop』What did you come here for?”

But of course, there were those that knew him.
Standing in his way was one of his brothers.
The man who had laughed at Talhand all those years ago and was chosen as the confidant of the Ore God.

“I've come to see the Ore God.”
“Know your place, as if he would meet with one such as yourself.”
“ ... ”

Talhand said nothing and removed the sword from his back.
He unfastened the cloth and the instant he removed the sword from its

scabbard, the man was shocked breathless.

Because underneath was a jet black sword blade.

So dark it was as if it would absorb all light, but it wasn't eerie, instead it possessed a kind of enlightening arrogance.

It was a thing of beauty.

“Just what is this...?”

“I forged it.”

“Impossible...”

In Dwarven smithing, swords showed everything.

An excellent Dwarf could produce an excellent sword.

Therefore, he couldn't believe that it was something Talhand created.

“I am here to present.”

The Ore God is renowned throughout the world as the greatest blacksmith and is the pride of the Dwarven race.

And as such, whenever a fellow blacksmith produces a work to a degree of quality, he has an obligation to inspect it.

Of course, anything not up to standard would immediately be turned away by any inspecting Dwarves.

And the man in front of him was doing just that.

“...”

He didn't like Talhand.

But swords didn't lie.

The black sword in front of him possessed no special features and wasn't crafted with any special techniques.

But, it was hard. Extremely hard.

No half hearted battle could damage it.

That made it an excellent blade.

Any who calls himself a dwarf couldn't lie about this sword.

“I give you permission. You may proceed, Talhand Clifftop.”

“I give my thanks, Dotol Flamesteel.”

Talhand recalled his old brother's name, bowed his head and resealed his sword.

On his path to the Ore God, Talhand encountered the same thing many times. But when they saw the sword, none barred his path.

Part 6

The memories of the esteemed『Ore God』Godbard regarding Talhand had somewhat faded.

It was only natural.

Many years had passed since Talhand had left the village.

“You’ve grown old, Talhand.”

“Speak for yourself.”

“I thought you would have died in the middle of nowhere a long time ago.”

“I had intended to.”

The two exchanged only a short greeting.

Off to Godbard’s side was his wife and right-hand man.

With the return of the village’s biggest madman, their vigilance was plain to see.

But there was no such thing between Talhand and Godbard.

Talhand had decided to face Godbard with a calm heart.

“...”

“...’

But Godbard didn’t have any intention to talk.

There was so many things that could be said.

About his experiences outside the village.

But words were unnecessary.

Talhand wordlessly took out the sword.

Godbard, still silently, removed it from its scabbard and marvelled at the blade.

“...Hoo.”

Godbard’s response was overflowing with admiration.

He brought the sword up to his face to study.

“This blade holds great faith... There is neither wavering nor naivety, but the inexperience can be spotted. Given the same materials and construction, I could

craft a better blade.”

Talhand smiled.

Of course he was happy.

No matter how hard Talhand had worked at smithing in these last few years, he couldn't catch up to the Ore God who had been diligently studying for over a hundred years.

That much was obvious.

“...Haha.”

“What's so funny?”

But that's not why.

That wasn't why at all.

“So you want to know the materials and construction?”

“Of course. It's a curious sword.”

Explaining the materials and construction behind presented swords was not a rare occurrence.

To place a reason on why swords are ever even presented, It would be to leave behind the method of creation.

What materials were used, how it was made and the thought behind it.

There are many who want to leave behind such things in history.

“The base material was a rock created through Earth Magic.

It was ground up and mixed with iron sand.

And I melted it with a combination of Fire and Wind Magic.

After that, I forged and tempered it like any other sword and cooled it with Water Magic.”

“A stone made from Earth Magic...”

Those words caused Godbard to suddenly remember something.

He had heard that method before.

Years ago, a crazy friend had told him about it over and over.

“Is this payback?”

“No. I simply thought to settle our score.”

“...Did you think that, once I saw this sword, I'd tell you to come back?”

“No. You've already told me what I wanted to hear. That's more than enough.”

That Godbard could create a better sword.
With that alone, he was satisfied.
He could feel a weight lifted off his shoulders.

Of course, with the same materials, and the same method, he could create a better sword.

But without Magic, you wouldn't be able to melt or break the stone, and no normal water could be used to cool it at that temperature.

And so, without someone able to use such Magic to a sufficient level...

Although, the genius in front of him, even without Talhand's method, could probably come up with some way to skilfully refine the stone.

"So, this『Stone』, did you craft it yourself?"
"...No. The son of an old friend created it for me."

He pulled out the three rods of rock from his backpack and lined them up in front of Godbard.

Godbard picked up one of the rocks and felt its weight.

He tried to break it in half to get a look at the cross section, and when he couldn't do that, he pulled out a hammer and attempted to smash it, but couldn't even manage a dent.

He was baffled at the hardness of the rod.

He suddenly got excited at the thought of using the rock to make something.
A smile floated to his face.

Talhand nodded, satisfied with the reaction.
Godbard was still as easy to read as he was in his childhood.

"Several days from now the one who made those will be coming to request an audience."

"..."

"Would you be willing to meet with him?"

Talhand sounded somewhat fond speaking of Rudeus.
He had now achieved his goal.
He had delivered his message.

Now all he had to do was wait for the man who gave him his task.

“He might look somewhat unreliable, and he’ll probably bring with him some unreasonable request...
But he’s a man with guts. You won’t lose anything meeting him.
I’ll swear it on that sword.”

Godbard eyed the sword and stones.
His wife and confidant by his side seemed to have their own thoughts but decided against voicing them.

Talhand was far beyond their expectations.
Probably partially due to the magician that made the stones.
Their curiosity was peaked.

“Fine then. His name?”
“Rudeus Greyrat.”
“Understood.”

Godbard etched that name into his mind.
Once Talhand was sure of it, he stood up.
It was only a spoken promise, but that was more than enough.
Godbard wasn’t one to break his promises.
Once, Talhand may not have thought that way, but what he did back then, was no broken promise.
Only Talhand’s inexperience.

“You’re leaving?”
“Yes.”
“After your display, nobody would have any complaints with you staying.”
“I have a shop in Millishion. I’ll probably be there as long as I live.”

With those parting words, Talhand left the Ore God’s residence.
While he had been inside, it had already been surrounded by his once siblings.
Their sharp gazes not hiding their desire to scrutinise him.

“Excuse me, but I’m going through.”
They opened a path where he walked.
And among those eyes filled with bewilderment and scorn, Talhand headed for the exit.

Nobody called back to him.
Nobody chased after him.
But Talhand’s steps were light and his heart was clear.

The curse had finally been undone.

The fact that the Ore God traded his loyalty to the Dragon God for a large amount of rocks was a story for another time.



Translator Notes and References

- 1. Japanese sword making terms referring to the different steels for core and the blade of the sword.

Chapter 20: Sword God Jino Britts

Sword God Jino Britts.

He is said to be the weakest Sword God in history.

Having never left the Holy Sword Region even once in his lifetime, with neither a tale of defeating a formidable foe.

Being the least popular of all the Sword Gods, people throughout the ages spoke about him as [a man who only became Sword God due to the passing of generations].

There have been only little confirmation as to whether he was the weakest or not.

However there is one fact that is for certain.

Out of all the Sword Gods, he lived the longest.

Jino Britts was born in the Holy Sword Region.

His father was a Sword Emperor and his mother was the younger sister of the Sword God.

He was three years old when he became self aware.

Jino had been swinging his sword for as long as he could remember.

Taking a wooden sword for children, he learned the way of swinging the sword from his father.

Just like that memory, Jino's childhood days were filled with swordsmanship.

Waking up early, running and practice-swinging, training after breakfast, training after lunch, fitting in a short break after dusk and eating dinner, practice-swinging and then going to bed.

It was that kind of life.

That being said, Jino did not particularly like swordsmanship.

He trained like it was a natural thing to do but was only doing it because of his parents made him.

He never once did it by his own will.

Still when he was young, it was still good.

There were only those who were either practicing or practiced swordsmanship around Jino.

Other kids were doing it as if it was natural and his Sword Emperor father as well as his mother who was the Sword God's younger sister, praised Jino for learning new techniques.

Even the retired old man praised Jino for being an admirable child when he was running around with a wooden sword.

There was no room for doubt.

Swordsmanship was common sense for Jino.

However, as Jino rose in rank, his surroundings changed.

His father who was pleased with him simply holding the sword became stricter as he ranked up.

Swing your sword to overpower your opponent.

You are still weak, don't be overconfident just because you are overflowing a bit with talent.

Like that, he taught Jino and repeated harsh training beyond the likes of before.

Even the adults from the dojo, who in the beginning used to watch over Jino pleasantly, began to turn towards him bluntly with unpleasant eyes as he passed through the ranks of Intermediate and Advanced and beat them in matches.

At that moment, swordsmanship for Jino changed to something he was not interested in.

Even then, it was not like he wanted to do something else.

If it was a child from another country, he may have said something like

wanting to become an adventurer.

However for Jino, the idea of [leaving home] never came out.

For some reason even his parents never taught him anything like that. Because there was no need to.

Jino never knew that there was an ever expanding world outside of the Holy Sword Region.

To Jino, the Holy Sword Region was the entire world.

Swordsmanship was the same as the likes of breathing air and eating food.

That's why he continued to practice it.

To someone like himself, his childhood friend Nina also happened to be his only friend.

Nina was the daughter of the Sword God.

In the Holy Sword Region, anyone lower than the Saint rank are not allowed to enter the main dojo.

Anyone not higher than the Advanced rank, including children, were thrown into dojos near their homes.

Nina was the daughter of the Sword God but she was no exception.

Nina wasn't the only kid in her generation, but she was the only kid that was on par with Jino's swordsmanship.

He got along with her.

In the Holy Sword Region, the popular topic was always about swordsmanship.

However, despite the fact that Jino disliked swordsmanship, he was a one of a kind genius and his theory regarding swordsmanship had an extraordinary side to it.

The only person in the same generation that followed him in that regard was Nina.

Nina was the leader.

She brought children of the same generation together and stood on the top of that summit herself.

She not only stood at the top of the children from the same dojo, but also the ones from every dojo in the Holy Sword Region.

Although there was the fact that she was the Sword God's daughter, Nina was definitely talented. Among the children, her swordsmanship was the strongest.

Amongst the children in the Holy Sword Region, the ability of one's sword was the basis for everything.

During her break from sword practice, Nina gathered the children and made a secret organization.

It was an organization only for children.

Jino took the role of second in command within the organization.

Although there was the fact that he was the second strongest, him getting along well with her played a role as well.

Nina and Jino.

It was most likely that these two saw something different in swordsmanship.

As proof, out of all the children in Nina's group, most of them never reached past the Sword Saint rank.

That organization lasted for five years but once Nina reached the Sword Saint rank, it was disbanded.

As expected, Nina and Jino reached the rank of Sword Saint at the same time.

Even compared to history, their growth was considered to be quite fast.

Especially Jino.

He became a Sword Saint at a mere 12 years old.

When Jino became a Sword Saint, people around him yelled in surprise [Isn't he the youngest?].

Both his father and mother praised him with open arms.

However Jino was not particularly happy.

He felt like he just did as he was told, so he didn't think it was amazing, and he knew that the four year older Nina was stronger than himself.

Nina and Jino were allowed to practice in the main dojo after becoming Sword Saints.

Nevertheless, nothing changed.

Everyday, everyday, sword training.

As usual.

Since Nina was the closest to him in terms of age and skill, he always practiced with her .

As usual.

Nina dragged around Jino like her henchman as usual.

As usual.

Despite the fact that Nina was surrounded by senior swordswomen, the fact that she was the leader didn't change.

Things that did change, were things such as the Sword God looking over his training and the increase in distance between his home and the dojo.

Ahh that's not right.

The opportunity to receive teachings by Nina's father, Sword God Gal Farion increased as well.

He said something totally different from what Jino's father said.

[Swing the sword for yourself]

If Gal's words were to be summarized, it would give off that kind of feeling.

Jino's dad would often say the likes of [Swing the sword for the sake of getting stronger] at the dinner table.

Jino knew the difference between the two phrases, but he couldn't really tell which one was right.

In regards to each one, nothing really hit home.

Nevertheless, there was no real scolding as long as he completed the training

given to him.

Also, in the occasional mock battles, as long as you didn't lose too much, no one said anything.

Despite the fact that moving to the dojo dropped his mock battle win rate, it was a fight against adults who were 10 years older than Jino. There was nothing to blame for the losses he sometimes suffered.

Although there was change.... nothing big changed.

That's what he thought.

It was obviously that day that the big change occurred.

She came.

Eris Greyrat.

The moment Eris arrived at the Holy Sword Region, she did a striking debut.

Defeating Jino and Nina in an instant, she gave off a strong impression.

Complete defeat.

But even that was not a huge change for Jino.

For Jino, something like losing was an everyday occurrence.

Although he was praised as a genius amongst his generation, he always lost to Nina.

It was the first time he lost to such a surprise attack, but when there were times he traded blows with his father or the Sword God, it ended in a similar result.

Therefore, it was the same thing either way.

It was not like he didn't feel angry, but after being scolded by his father due to the Sword God declaring [Jino is naive], such feelings vanished.

Ahh, so it's alright to do things like that too, such was the lesson he got out of it.

Though despite learning the lesson, he had the level of discretion to think [Let's not do it because it will be frowned upon at the dojo].

Nina was the one who changed the most.

Nina was different from Jino.

With her bruised face flushing with rage, she didn't speak for that entire day.

After practice in the dojo, she returned home and cried at the backyard in secret.

She swung her sword while crying.

As she repeatedly muttered, Unforgivable, unforgivable...

Jino hesitated to call out to her.

It was the first time Nina experienced losing to someone amongst her generation.

Even so, it was not like she lost with just any ordinary sword.

From what Jino had heard, they fought using a wooden sword embedded with iron.

She didn't even lose gracefully.

Collapsing, getting mounted on and beaten endlessly, even leaking herself due to the fear and pain, that was how she lost.

It was a defeat like no other.

It was the first time in her life that she experienced something like this.

Since then, Nina's attack against Eris begun.

At first, Nina conspired with the other swordswomen and tried to exclude her out.

But Eris never cared about other people from the very beginning, so it resulted in failure.

Eris desired for strength more than anyone else.

The Holy Sword Region's internal affairs was none of her concern.

Without any opposition, Nina's frustration began to build up regularly.

She badmouthed Eris at every opportunity and even complained about her to

Jino.

Jino didn't like that kind of Nina.

When Nina was the leader, she was completely different.

Even if there was someone she didn't like, she didn't exclude them out.

Nina looked like a bad person to even Jino, who knew her for a long time.

It was one day that changed that.

Without telling anyone, Nina suddenly disappeared.

Of course, there was no one that worried.

Although Nina had never left the Holy Sword Region and was ignorant of the outside world, she was a Sword Saint.

There was talk about how she may have left to go on a combat training trip because of being provoked by Eris.

There were more people who were impressed than those who were worried.

It was to the point that even Jino was told by his father: [It may be a good time for you to see the outside world as well. If you hunt a red dragon, maybe that relaxed expression of yours will change].

Although Jino thought about doing it, he never took action.

Because he never had much interest about the outside world he never once visited.

To put it bluntly, he was a bit scared as well.

The majority of the adults in the Holy Sword Region knew about the [Outside World].

However, it was at most to the degree of knowing about neighboring countries or the countries they were from.

There weren't many people who actually traveled around the world.

The tales that were told were mostly about where and what technique they used to defeat a certain opponent.

Among such tales, there was one adult who told him stories of her failures.

Ghyslaine Dorudia.

It was Sword King Ghyslaine.

Although she was an adventurer who traveled around the world, she taught him about the times she almost died due to her own stupidity.

[The world is a place where even the most talented swordsman die. If you don't know how to use magic or math, or how to read, death will come swiftly]

Ghyslaine's serious face as she told him these stories made Jino believe her.

It was because Jino, like the rest of the children in the Holy Sword Region, didn't know how to read, use magic or math.

Without any interest, rather fear of not being able to solve things with swordsmanship alone.

It was no surprise that he didn't even want to go out.

In any case, Jino didn't chase after Nina and days passed by.

It was after two months since Nina left that she came back.

Jino wanted to ask Nina about her trip, but she didn't tell him anything.

Something probably happened.

Since that day, Nina changed.

Stopping her harassment towards Eris, she became more serious and earnest in regards to swordsmanship.

She rarely associated with other swordswomen and her arrogant nature disappeared as well.

She spent most of her breaks on special training.

Though that special training was nothing more than trading blows with Jino in sparring sessions.

Following her like a henchman, he traded blows with her countless times.

Trading blows silently.

Such days passed by.

And so, this was when Jino began to fall for Nina.

It was only after months and years passed by that Jino began to become aware of his love.

Before that, many things happened.

The North Emperor Auber and Water God Reyda came to visit.

For Jino, none of these events interested him but the same could not be said for Nina.

Being provoked by Eris, Nina constantly grew stronger.

Even Jino, who did special training with her, also became stronger as well.

But it slowly became impossible to win against Nina.

Even though he rarely won against her before, his win rate against her steadily plummeted.

In the blink of an eye, there was a huge gap between Nina and Jino.

Jino didn't really think much about this issue.

Losing against Nina was the same as before.

Going from winning only once every five times to winning once every ten times is not that big of a change.

But why is it.

Somehow he felt like he was being left behind.

At that day, Sword God Gal Farion called for Nina, Eris and Jino.

The Sword God asked for the answer of [The difference between a Sword Saint, Sword King and a Sword Emperor].

Jino had no idea what the answer was.

However, Eris and Nina were different.

Nina answered after a moment of thought while Eris ended with insisting her answer was correct despite being told it was wrong.

The Sword God was also satisfied with Eris' answer and made them fight each

other.

Announcing that the winner would become a Sword King.

And so, Eris won.

Eris became a Sword King while Nina wept.

Seeing the weeping Nina, Jino had a strange feeling.

Unconsciously clenching his fists, he tightly shut his mouth.

He couldn't understand his feelings.

Nor the reason why he felt like so.

He might be irritated.

Or maybe even frustrated.

Why isn't he himself standing there?

Does he not even have the right to fight those two?

After this, what would become of himself?

It was the first time Jino ever felt such emotions.

At the same time, he realized it.

The question that the Sword God asked Nina [Marrying with Jino or becoming a Sword King. If you had to choose between the two, which would you choose?].

Hearing that question and feeling his face flustered, unable to deny anything.

That he somehow fell in love with Nina.

Since then, Jino changed a bit.

It wasn't that his usual behavior changed. He completed the training given to him by his father and the Sword God and continued his special training with Nina.

That didn't change even after Eris left the Holy Sword Region.

His matches against Nina just became more intense than before.

What changed was his attitude towards swordsmanship.

He became more proactive than before.

He began to think about the meaning of everyday practice as well as thinking about each technique, he experimented with various things.

The result was extraordinary.

In the blink of an eye, he became on par with Nina.

It wasn't anything strange.

Jino had the talent from the very beginning.

Nina also changed.

Nina, who became a Sword King, began to often travel to nearby villages and towns after Eris left the Holy Sword Region.

Hunting demons, going to dojos in big towns and giving out lessons.

Nina was proactive in such activities instead of just focusing on improving her swordsmanship.

On the other hand, Jino refused to leave the Holy Sword Region as usual.

Though he no longer felt scared of the outside world, he had no thought of leaving.

Even Jino did not know the reason why.

Maybe there was no reason at all.

But there was also no reason to leave either.

He trained diligently even when Nina wasn't there, and from time to time, built up a lot of practice by sparring against his Sword Emperor father.

However, each time, he couldn't overpower his opponent.

His Sword Emperor father was too far out of reach.

According to the Sword God, he would be gifted with his Sword King license soon, but that was it.

In terms of technique, he had already caught up to his father.

It was the same for Nina.

It was probably the same for fellow Sword Kings Ghyslaine and Eris.

But he couldn't win.

He was lacking a single step.

He knew that.

He even knew what he needed to do to win.

But he couldn't put it into action.

Although he became proactive, he restrained from putting himself into a harsh environment.

No, there was a time when he did put himself into a harsh environment.

And each time, he always thought to himself.

Why must I do these things to the point where I suffer?

Years passed by without an answer.

One day, Nina asked him after coming back from seeing a coronation ceremony in the Asura Kingdom.

[Hey Jino. Why don't we get married?]

Jino responded with a nod.

He didn't give it much thought.

Instead, it was something he expected to happen sooner or later.

It was because he liked Nina and it didn't seem there was any indication of her being in that sort of a relationship with another man either.

Nina, who had an impatient personality, brought Jino to her room and immediately did the deed.

It was both their first time, so there were a lot of lacking points as well.

However, there was enough compatibility between the two to dedicate themselves to at least one night.

As the pleasant feelings kept coming, he thought to himself.

I want more of this.

It was probably the first time in Jino's life that he wanted something so strongly.

The day after that.

Jino took Nina along to see the Sword God.

It wasn't Nina that took Jino, but Jino who took Nina.

To tell him that they wanted to get married.

It was a rare sight for Jino to move independently.

[No]

Was the Sword God's immediate reply.

The Sword God who never once interfered with his daughter's education, gave a firm NO for the first time.

The reason was simple.

In the eyes of the Sword God, Jino lacked charm.

Without a sense of independence, not to mention an adventurous spirit let alone ambition.

A man who simply does as he is told.

Although the Sword God did not know that the two had spent the night together, he figured that Nina was the one who brought up the topic of marriage to him as well.

Jino was the type of man that never wanted something for himself.

He never tried to grasp something with his own hands.

And yet, marriage?

Don't make me laugh.

But at the same time, he had another thought.

That it wasn't a bad flow of events either.

[If you want to get married, defeat me yourself. Then I'll give you my permission].

It was the Sword God's way of encouraging Jino.

By giving him an obstacle, he hoped that Jino would show at least a bit of determination.

[..... !]

However, at that moment, Jino understood.

He felt as if something clicked in his head.

I understand.

Ahh, it was this all along.

The thing that the Sword God would always tell him.

Something that he was missing.

The identity of [Why?].

It was this.

It was something as simple as this.

Jino felt as if everything in front of his eyes became clear.

The thing he couldn't really understand throughout his life was starting to become clear.

He grasped something with his own hands.

The final one, the one step that he was missing.

It was a [Goal].

After that, it was simple.

Jino changed.

He completely changed.

His entire being changed.

He stopped all the training that he was ordered to do until now.

He even stopped his special training with Nina.

Did he become truant?

Not at all. He started training by himself.

In that training, there was no need for a partner.

He already had plenty of combat experience from his special training with Nina, practicing with his father and participating in countless mock battles.

There was a theory for winning as well.

Jino had a vision of gaining certain victory against swordsmen of the Sword God Style.

However, to reach that vision, there was an extraordinary amount of effort needed. He had to overcome painful and harsh days.

Hence the reason he didn't do it until now.

He didn't have a reason to do it.

Whether it was frustration or irritation, such feelings weren't enough to endure it.

However, it was different now. Jino had a goal in his hands.

I want Nina, I want her no matter what. Even if I have to go through painful things I want her.

That goal changed the painful and harsh to joy and hope.

After that, all there was left was to grind and sharpen.

Forging his body to increase the speed and weight of the sword.

It was needed to verify his theory.

Training, Special Training, Practice.

There were countless words, but none of them applied.

If one was to find a word that applied.... It would be [Work].

Jino simply did the things that he needed to do.

To make his body be able to defeat the Sword God, he worked flawlessly everyday.

To reach his limits, Jino continuously worked.

Jino was able to do it.

He had that sort of talent from the very beginning.

With motivation, deeply thought out theory, flawless work.

The innate talent that controlled all those things.

With these four elements combined, Jino's sword became sharp.



And so, the fated day came.

That day, Jino got up early and went to where his childhood friend was and once again proposed to her.

Facing off each other with wooden swords, Jino defeated Nina and told her to become his.

After she accepted, he headed to where the Sword God was.

It was the afternoon and there was a mock battle going on in the main dojo.

In the Holy Sword Region, it was a combat practice that happened from time to time.

It was not only a place where one could test to see how much their skill improved, but also allowed for two people to challenge each other to see who was at the top.

In such a place of training, Jino unexpectedly came back.

For a Sword King like Jino, his opponents would either be two Sword Saints, Nina who was the same rank as he was, or a Sword Emperor who he would challenge together with Nina as two people.

Nina was absent.

Since that was the case, naturally he would face off against two Sword Saints as tradition followed.

However, as soon as he walked to the center of the dojo, Jino pointed his wooden sword at the Sword God.

The dojo fell deadly silent in an instant.

[Jino! You bastard, what are you doing!]

The first person to get up from their seat was Jino's father, Sword Emperor Timothy Britts.

He raised the wooden sword he had by his side and struck at Jino.

No, he tried to strike him.

However, the moment he tried to get up with one knee, the knee that was at the front was smashed.

At the same time, the hand holding the wooden sword was also smashed and caused the sword to drop on the floor.

Sword Emperor Timothy Britts opened his eyes wide in shock.

He was used to pain.

His facial expression never showed pain.

Despite that, the cold sweat that ran down his face.

In his eyes, there was the figure of Jino who had just finished swinging his sword.

After a glance at his father, Jino turned around to the Sword God.

[Sword God sama, I have come to take Nina]

He declared as he pointed the sword just like he did a moment ago.

Sword God Gal Farion looked at that sword and laughed ferociously.

[Alright, come ——]

at me.

Before he could finish those words, Jino moved.

But Gal also moved at the same time.

Rather, Gal was faster.

It was because Gal was already in stance.

When the Sword Emperor was defeated, he picked up a wooden sword, raised his hips and readied his sword drawing stance.

Though it was a disadvantageous stance, to Gal, nothing was disadvantageous.

To be able to surpass his opponent with overwhelming speed despite being at such a disadvantage, such was the being known as the Sword God.

However, he couldn't surpass Jino.

Jino moved at roughly the same speed as the Sword God.

Nevertheless, the two wooden swords that moved at roughly the same speed clashed together a little closer to Jino.

That is to say, the Sword God's speed was superior.

Thus, the Sword God drove his strike in even deeper with more speed.

It was at that moment that the Sword God had a bad feeling.

The Sword God was nearly flawless in this single trade of blows.

For the Sword God Style that had the motto of "A Single Strike", to block an opponent's sword was considered a poor move.

However, collapsing the opponent's stance with the first strike and finishing him off with the next wasn't unheard of.

It was like that until now.

To the Sword God Gal Farion who dominated his opponent with the first strike, there was no such thing as defeat.

That's what he thought, but Jino's sword was heavier than any other sword Gal had faced before.

Jino's stance didn't collapse.

Of course Gal's stance didn't collapse either.

It was a tie.

It was rare for Gal to experience a tie between first blows.

It was a tie despite the fact that Gal drove his strike in deeper.

In that case, the next move would be different.

Gal's stretched out sword took time to come back.

Jino's sword was different. Despite catching up to Gal's sword, it was in a position where it could instantly go back.

It wasn't like both of their stances collapsed.

It was the slightest difference in time.

But Jino made that slightest difference his.

The definitive difference that was like putting a thread through a needle in order to gain certain victory against Sword God Gal Farion.

Gal Farion couldn't execute his second swing.

That day, Jino grasped everything he wanted into his own hands.

Sword God Jino Blitz.

He grasped everything he wanted into his own hands.

Nina Farion.

That was everything he wanted.

The title of the greatest swordsman, [Sword God] was nothing much to him.

He never once left the Holy Sword Region in his lifetime.

This resulted in him having the lowest popularity out of all the Sword Gods and rumors spread about him being history's weakest Sword God.

He was also not accepted by the Sword Saints who were apprentices of the previous Sword God.

But he didn't care.

Rumors had no meaning.

That was because he was going to defeat every single opponent who challenged him.

Such opponents included a swordsman who tried to become the next Sword God.

A challenger who came after hearing the rumors about the [Weakest Sword

God].

Jino crushed them all.

After becoming the Sword God. Undefeated.

That was Jino Britts' combat record.

It may have been possible that if he left the Holy Sword Region, he could have beaten experts such as the Water God Reyda and Death God Randolph.

However, he didn't do it.

For him, the Holy Sword Region was the entire world.

From the beginning to the end, there wasn't anything he wanted from the outside world.

Nevertheless, after becoming the Sword God, his world expanded without a doubt.

Because other than opponents, there were many people who paid a visit to befriend the Sword God Jino Britts.

Though they did not want to fight him, at times they requested for sword lessons and at times did business with him.

Rudeus Greyrat was also one of those people.

Yep, he suddenly showed up one day.

With the Mad Sword King Eris Greyrat at his side, who Jino had deep relations with.

Bringing along with him, the North God Kalman III and Dragon God Orsted...

Chapter 21: The Current Room

Currently, I'm in the Holy Sword Region's dojo.

From what I heard, it is called [The Current Room].

On my right is Alek.

With a smile on his face and not a hint of bloodlust.

On his waist is the two handed longsword forged by the Ore God using the black rocks I created.

Though it has no special power, as expected of a blade forged by a being with the title of God, its quality is excellent.

Alek took a liking to this sword which was close to two meters long, and began to use it.

Orsted is on my left.

Wearing a black helmet and not uttering a single word.

Without a hint of movement, he is standing still like a static image.

Though it seems like a fly would stick to him, due to his intimidating aura, not even a mosquito comes near him.

But the other people weren't paying attention to me, Alek or Orsted.

Everyone was paying attention to the person standing in front of me.

It's Eris.

She was standing with a wooden sword in her grasp.

Though her face was tense, she wasn't particularly releasing any bloodlust.

However, it was clear that the wooden sword she held tightly in her hand was filled with strength.

Eris was standing in the center of the Current Room with a wooden sword in her hand.

And in front of her, was a Sword Saint with a broken wrist tumbling on the floor.

[... I give up]

Saying such words as if he was frustrated, he stood up and bowed.

Without waiting for Eris' reply, he moved back to the side of the dojo.

On the side of the dojo.

There was a row of Sword God Style swordsmen standing side by side.

There seems to be close to 20 of them.

To say that each of them is a Sword Saint, the world is a small place. That small world is being crowded into a small place.

And across from Eris.

There was a seated man and woman.

Though I don't know their age, they must be around mine.

I don't know if I could call them young with that kind of mindset, but seeing how many of the Sword Saints were in their 30s and 40s, it is probably safe to say so.

The man sat the woman beside him and held her shoulder.

Compared to the other Sword Saints, he seems to be relaxed.

Even in front of Orsted.

Though Orsted had his helmet on to suppress the curse, he is being relaxed in front of that Orsted.

Jino Britts.

As expected of the Sword God.

Holding a woman with such an imposing figure, I can't think that we are around the same age.

At the very least, I can't sit my wife beside me and hold her shoulder or touch her waist in front of Orsted.

If I did, I would be beaten. Primarily by Eris.

But I did get a favorable impression when the woman began to hit the man's hand away when he sometimes stretched it towards her chest.

The woman's name is Nina.

She is Eris' friend and is said to be a Sword King in terms of rank.

But I can't feel even a slightest Sword King-ish aura from her.

Leaving her body to the seemingly happy Jino, she is occasionally hitting away her husband's hand that would stretch towards her chest.

They are not taking any notice of us at all.

Stupid couple, people might even call them as such.

[.....]

Well, let's explain why we are in such a tense state of affairs.

The summary until now!

Hello to all you good children!

My name is Rudeus Greyrat!

I've come to visit the hottest and coolest tourist spot, the [Holy Sword Region].

Thinking about the future, I had no choice but to talk to the Sword God Style and Eris had a connection with the Sword God as well.

Also, thinking of this as a sort of an obligation, I came to give my greetings as well.

Members of course include both Eris and I!

As far as I know, there seems to be ton of people in the Sword God Style that like to let swing their swords before opening their mouths, so I didn't bring people affiliated with magic.

Of course, though these guys probably have morals as fellow human beings, we killed the Sword God's father in law during the battle in the Biheril Kingdom.

From that point of view, do you think saying [Please lend us your strength]

won't cause problems?

Well depending on the mood, we might just come back without speaking a single word.

Anyways, since we don't exactly know what will happen, this is a two man trip including me and Eris, who knows the Holy Sword Region quite well.

... that was the plan but there was a surprise.

When I was talking about going to the Holy Sword Region, Orsted acting unusually, said he was going to go too, as if he was hiding something.

He was probably concerned that I was going to say something carelessly and make the Sword God angry.

In other words, he was going to escort us.

Anyways, there was no reason to refuse his offer. Orsted is definitely reliable too.

And since Orsted was going, Alek said [Well then, me too].

Alek. Yep, the guy who has a bit of a strong desire for becoming a hero.

There's also the fact that he has a reputation like Cliff back in the day for not knowing how to read the atmosphere!

I wanted to say that [Well, the person who looks like he would cause problems is probably NG].

Though he takes care of Sieg quite well, there's a difference between that and this.

But Orsted sama said [... do as you wish].

As a result, it was decided that the four of us including me, Eris, Orsted and Alek would go to the Holy Sword Region.

And so we arrived at the Holy Sword Region.

There was a tranquil scenery giving off vibes of a snow covered country village spreading out.

And the place we arrived to while I said alone in a lonely voice, [It's a pretty

good scenery] [For the countryside, they do have a good arrange of wooden swords] [Ah, villager found] was the Sword God Style's main dojo.

The place that we were led to by smiling Sword Saints, was the Current Room.

A gentle mood full of smiles.

But for some reason, my muscles are twitching.

It's probably nothing!

Rather than talking about that, it's time for greetings, greetings.

... while I was thinking such thoughts, a Sword Saint said the following.

[First of all, I want to see the Mad Sword King Eris' sword that was said to have defeated the previous generation]

You want to do that first!? But before I could turn around to see what was going on after saying such words, the Sword God shrugged his shoulders and said [Do as you wish] without a care.

And so began the slaughter.

The smiling Sword Saints with their smiling faces began to seethe bloodlust from their entire bodies and challenged Eris.

Despite their smiles and use of wooden swords, it was obvious that they were going for the kill.

Using the sparring match as their excuse, they were going to beat her to death. It was easy to see that they were not going to hold back.

Nevertheless, Eris is more or less a Sword King.

She wouldn't fall behind to those Sword Saints.

With ease, she turned the tables against the Sword Saints.

As Eris started to beat each person one by one, the smiles on the Sword Saints' faces began to fade and showed signs of hatred. As of right now, they aren't even bothering to hide their bloodlust.

However, in the middle of that, there was one person with a carefree expression.

It was Jino.

Even Nina, who was bothered by the bloodlust of the Sword Saints, showed a little troubled expression, but Jino seemed like he couldn't care less.

And so, this tense space was created!

So, I tried to explain it with the utmost enthusiasm...

Ha.

My stomach hurts.

Why did it turn out like this...

I feel like I suddenly failed. It's impossible to have a discussion with this atmosphere.

But I want to at least explain myself.

There wasn't even time to stop them.

It honestly happened too fast.

When Jino finished saying [Do as you wish], Eris picked up her wooden sword as if it was the natural thing to do and the Sword Saints waited for her in the center of the dojo.

By the time I sat down in my current position, Eris already struck down one of them.

And so, without any time to stop them, the Sword Saints came one by one saying [I'll go next], [Me next!].

However, I think the time to stop these fights has come near.

There's roughly around 20 Sword Saints, and Eris has defeated close to 20 of them.

The one she is fighting right now is the final Sword Saint.

In that case, he will most likely come out.

Sword God Jino Britts.

Even though he is whistling without a care, he will most likely have no choice but to come out if everyone below him is defeated.

The Sword Saints are probably waiting for that moment as well.

The moment when the Sword God comes out and beats the red hair Mad Sword King to death.

Taking revenge towards those who killed the previous Sword God.

They came forward with such a proposal solely for this reason.

I am regretting it.

I shouldn't have come.

If Eris fights with the Sword God, she won't get out unscathed.

Even I don't think I can fight the Sword God at this distance.

And I'm also thankful.

Even if I can't react in time, Orsted and Alek should be able to block the Sword God's blade.

Though Eris may not be able to get out of it unscathed, as long as she doesn't die, it'll be alright.

Eris should have at least that much of a resolution.

Nevertheless, I'm thankful towards those two for coming here with us.

However, if I interfere with the fight between the Sword God and Eris, all negotiations will probably be over.

Nevertheless, I can't predict what will exactly happen.

Well it definitely won't be good.

Anyways, let's stop it.

Let's try to talk it out.

That's my job.

Sounds good Rudeus. These people may be hot blooded, but if you try hard, they'll probably listen.

Hang in there okay?

Let's Fight! (TL Note: This is a translation of レッツファイトだ!, the word is used

as an encouraging/motivational word than literally “Let’s Fight!”) [Ugh... I give up]

And just now, the final Sword Saint has been defeated.

He is tightly clenching his wrist like the previous Sword Saint before him.

Actually, all the Sword Saints are clenching their wrists.

Whether they were right handed or left handed, Eris beat them with the same technique.

This only angered the Sword Saints even more.

Next up should be Nina?

No, Nina doesn’t seem to have any intention of moving.

The Sword God will probably move first.

If the Sword God makes his move, it’s my turn.

Time to look for when he moves.

When the Sword God begins to stand up, it’s time to switch to full on flatter mode.

It was an impressive match, but my throat is parched after the watching the match. How about we take a break and drink some tea?... Let’s say some lines like these.

Hm? Is it okay to say such lines?

Doesn’t it sound like it’s just going to make the situation worse?

Maybe I should go more in the lines of praising the Sword Saints who lost.

Haha, well, the gentlemen of the Holy Sword Region are truly dedicated to sword practice. Let’s go with this.

With this, even they will say [Well, these were only practice matches so it can’t be helped that we lost] and come out with such a conclusion.

Alright let’s go, Let’s go now, Let’s go.

[.....]

However, there is no change to the Sword God.

Nina also seems to have no intention of moving either.

[Are you done?]

Said Sword God Jino Britts whose voice gave off a light feeling in the midst of this tense situation.

It was in a very nonchalant voice.

[And? What did you come here for again?]

Huh?

It sounds like he will listen before fighting.

It isn't like the Sword God Style... but it is convenient.

I came forward and raised my voice without hesitation.

[... First of all, my apologies]

[An apology?]

[In regards to the previous Sword God]

As soon as I said that, the atmosphere around the Sword Saints began to change as if they were waiting for this moment.

The other side gave us the cue!

The time is now! Let's get out revenge!

If they were dogs, they would have been wagging their tails and barking.

I thought about talking about it in a more roundabout way, but it's all the same.

There was no running away from this.

[.....]

However, the Sword God began to make an awkward face.

If you make a face like that, it'll put me at a loss too.

I felt like I said something weird and wanted to look around.

Nevertheless, he began to nod his head as if he understood it.

[Ah, about that, I've heard about it from Nina a while back. Nina said she would cooperate with you all. That being said, I guess there is a need to apologize for killing the father of your cooperator]

He said it as if it was none of his business.

To the point where it left the Sword Saints more speechless than myself.

[But master... the previous Sword God Gal Farion, tried to challenge you on his own will no?

Then isn't it more appropriate that we apologize to you?

If this pertains to the entirety of the Sword God Style, it is us who broke the agreement after all.

So what happens now?

I don't really know much about these kind of things]

The ones that want to know what will happen is us.

Am I really talking to the top authority of the Sword God Style?

I came here thinking that he would be at least as hard headed as Atofe...

It's a strange feeling.

[Umm...]

Calm down, first comes answering his questions.

I'm pretty sure Eris talked to Nina during Ariel's coronation ceremony.

That we were planning to make the Holy Sword Region, the Sword God, into our ally.

But before such talks were finished, the fight at the Biheril Kingdom occurred and Gal Farion became our enemy.

[Eris and Nina only talked and there had yet to be a formal agreement to the talks. Did Nina tell the Sword God about our talks?]

[She did tell him, but that was all there was to it]

Nina who was vaguely nodded her head.

To those words, Jino also nodded his head.

[To say the least, we didn't hear anything about [Opposing the Dragon God Orsted and his allies]. But if he did fight...]

Jino frowned with his eyes.

[That means that the previous generation decided to become your enemy huh?]

The Sword Saints' spirits began to rise.

Alright, well said.

Let's grab our swords and fight, hurry, hurry!

I felt like I could hear such thoughts.

[... Wait. Please calm down]

After hearing those words, Jino shrugged his shoulders.

[Do I look like I'm flustered?]

[No you look really calm. It's just that, look, we came all the way here to apologize and get rid of any hostilities between us. It's not good for us to fight with your Sword God Style who have a strong combat strength either. We want to be close to those who are strong. We also have things to keep you interested as well. A trade of swords and food, maintenance of infrastructure and even cooperation in regards to construction. In other words, if you become our enemies, we will have to stop such activities. Isn't that bad for you as well?]

[Haa...]

Jino sighed in response to my words.

My explanation may have been a bit too long. I probably would have kept it shorter if I was talking to Atofe. But then again, he doesn't seem like her who would simply agree and say [Alright, you are our comrade!]

Jino looked at me and said with a trouble expression.

[Do I have to say every little thing? The previous generation did not say anything to us. In other words, he chose to fight you as an individual. We have nothing to do with it. Therefore, we have no intention of fighting you. Besides, there's something more important than something like that anyways]

After saying such words, Jino pulled Nina to his side and buried his face onto her head.

Even though Nina is blushing, she is letting him do it.

It looks like they are passionate for each other, but wouldn't it be better to show a little restraint in front of others?

Look at that. Eris' face is blushing red. Her eyes are open wide. She is crossing her arms and standing with her legs wide in a stance to be ready for a fight.

However, is the person I'm talking to really the Sword God?

His response is so logical that it scares me.

It feels weird.

Aren't the Sword God Style's higher ups more like [Shut up! Stop saying things that we can't understand! You're the boss' enemy! We're gonna kill you!]

Ah no, that's more like Atofe isn't it.

But isn't it pretty much the same thing?

Ah, maybe the person in front of me is a body double. Or it may be a staff member who is in charge of public relations.

[.....]

But I'm thankful for the way this conversation is headed.

Though it is a bit weird seeing how calm he is knowing that we killed his master.

Well, I can understand if he is acting that way because he decided to put the future ahead of his emotions after thinking about the current situation.

He probably thought a lot about it before and came to such a decision.

[If it's like that, then please once again...]

[Please wait!]

The person who shouted such words and stood up was a Sword Saint.

With his face flustered, he pointed at us... no rather, at Orsted.

[We admired the previous Sword God, we saw his sword, learned and practiced and became strong! Such a person was killed! By them! They killed the previous Sword God who we are indebted to and yet, why are you just silently sitting there!? Is it okay for our Sword God Style to be looked down upon?]

[Then you go do it. Bring a real sword, I'll be watching]

Jino said that immediately.

The Sword Saint's movement came to a halt.

[Huh... ?]

[Those guys probably came here expecting the same thing. Mad Sword King Eris, Dragon God Orsted, North God Kalman III. And behind them, Rudeus Greyrat will provide them with magic support. Even if you guys all fight them at once, you won't even get a single sword strike in and be annihilated.]

[That's...]

[Now, go do it. We'll clean up your corpses and make sure to give you a funeral as well. I don't know if you guys can defend your honor with your deaths but I'm sure you will be satisfied]

[...]

After hearing such words, the Sword Saint sat down.

Clenching his fists in frustration.

And so, he said with a shaking voice.

[Do we... have no choice but to let these guys go? Without fighting them when they are the enemies of the previous generation?]

[Then you why don't you just do it. I have no intention of holding you guys back. You are free to do as you please, just like my father did as well]

Jino seems to be troubled.

In my case, rather than worsening the resentment, I want it to be settled down as well.

Though trying to settle it with a life or death situation is a bit too much.

[Now that I think about it, the Sword Emperor isn't around huh]

Eris muttered.

Jino turned to face Eris.

[My father and his companions have left the Holy Sword Region. They weren't willing to accept my position as the Sword God]

It doesn't seem like the Sword Emperor they are talking about has anything to do with Nina.

From what Jino is saying, the Sword Emperor in question seems to be one of the two disciples under the previous Sword God.

Looking around, the person in question doesn't seem to be here.

[By now they probably have opened a dojo in Asura, Millis or even the Dragon King Kingdom. Well, I wouldn't have minded if they wanted me to be the one that had to leave...]

Jino said as he shrugged his shoulders.

[So is the apology the only conversation we will be having? In my case all I can really say is "thank you very much" at this point]

As I expected, he is a little weird.

I don't intend to talk bad about someone else, but this man named Jino seems to be too cold, or maybe too concerned about the future.... He sure is weird.

[No, the conversation is going to get a little long. We are currently in a war against an existence named Hitogami]

With those thoughts in mind, I decide to go in detail about our fight against Hitogami.

Nevertheless, it seems like Jino is understanding my words.

If this conversation can be settled without a fight, it will be a win win situation for us.

Though it feels like I've been let down, it isn't bad.

If I look at him without my expectations of what a Sword God should be like, he is an agreeable young man.

Once I get him to agree to cooperate with us, we can get along while drinking lots of tea afterwards.

If I do that, the weird feeling he is giving off will surely disappear as well.

[— With that being said, we wish to ask for the cooperation of the Sword God Style for the future]

[I decline]

... Mmm?

Huh?

[We will not cooperate]

Despite the Sword Saints shouting [Yes! Yes!], even they are feeling astonished.

[... Does this mean that you will be siding with Hitogami?]

[No we will not oppose you either]

Mmm?

[Then... are you planning to stay neutral? Can we hear the reason?]

[I wish to defend my master's teachings]

[Teachings?]

[My master said this at every opportunity: [Be strong for your own sake]. To be honest, I didn't know what he meant. Even now, I don't think there is a person here who understands it as well. Even my father and his companions didn't understand. But I finally understood when I thought about making Nina mine. The sword should be swung for one's own sake. For the pure purpose of achieving your goals]

There was a conviction in Jino's voice that said such words.

A conviction that didn't allow a single doubt in the words that he spoke.

[Therefore, I won't cooperate. I will swing my sword for my sake. All for myself]

[... So for instance, if your family is about to be in danger, you won't swing your sword?]

[No, at that moment if I love my family, I will swing my sword]

At that moment, for the first time, Jino looked directly at me.

A strong and imposing gaze.

That gaze was something far from what Eris told me about him.

[Or are you saying that you will kill my family if we don't cooperate?]

Everyone inside the dojo froze.

Jino's statement simultaneously gave off both chills and bloodlust.

Cold sweat is covering my entire body. If I was alone, I may have even wet myself.

He is the Sword God.

The Sword God that defeated the previous Sword God Gal Farion in an instant.

Though he is weird, he may even be one of the top five powerhouses in the world.

I understood that.

[No. I also love my family as well]

[Is that so? I'm relieved]

The bloodlust dissipated.

[You are just like the rumors say, Rudeus san]

[What are you talking about?]

[That you became the subordinate of the Dragon God for your family and

even blew up a country]

[Well that's roughly the truth. Though I didn't blow up a country]

[And you are even calmer than I thought you would be]

Jino turned his gaze elsewhere.

His gaze laid upon my sides. Eris and Alek, as well as the Sword Saints.

All the Sword Saints had their hands hovering over their sword handles.

Some of them even have their swords unsheathed.

Looking behind me, Orsted didn't even move an inch. As expected.

I didn't move as well, but that's because I was shivering at all the bloodlust.

[In other words, you are a trustworthy man]

What do you mean by [In other words]?

[Because you are such a person, I can be relieved. We won't cooperate. Because my sword is a sword that will only be swung for me and the ones I love.]

[... Ah. I see]

I slowly understood Jino Britts.

To put it simply, he wants to protect the ones he love with his own hands.

He isn't so different from me.

I clung to Orsted in tears because I wasn't able to do that.

But he thinks he can do it, and also has the ability to do so as well.

He has no plans to do anything outside of that.

Of course he is the Sword God. Even if he declares his neutrality, the enemy will still come.

But he probably doesn't want to increase the amount of enemies with his own actions.

Though I don't understand why the previous Sword God is not a part of [the ones he love].

No... That's not it.

The previous Sword God [lived and died for himself].

As a result, they probably think that blaming us for his death is barking up the wrong tree.

[... Umm]

At this rate, persuading him may be hard.

Jino is already set with his answer.

His mind won't change until we decide to give up our fight against Hitogami or he thinks that he can't protect his loved ones by himself.

I won't be able to persuade him at all.

Because he already made his decision.

To never look back after making a decision, as expected of the Sword God Style's top authority.

[Is that so... Then please be careful when Hitogami approaches you sincerely in your dreams. Don't fall for his lies when he tells you that it is for your family's sake and lose everything]

[Alright]

It's disappointing, but let's withdraw for now.

I understand that they have no interest in opposing us for now.

They won't be our allies, but they won't become our enemies either.

He realized what kind of person I was and told me he [wanted to be neutral] in good faith. He probably isn't planning anything.

Then let's be satisfied with this for now.

[If I ever die and my position is taken over, please come again. In the end, this is my personal decision after all]

[I will do so]

I turned around and faced Orsted.

I don't know what he is thinking about underneath that helmet.

[That being said, are you okay with that Orsted sama?]

[... Alright]

As I asked while turning around, Orsted slowly nodded his head in agreement.

After that, after tending to the wounded Sword Saints, the situation began to flow to where Alek joined the training.

Right now, I'm sitting at the inner part of the dojo watching Alek spar with the Sword Saints.

The Sword Saints are holding wooden swords, but they were definitely filled with bloodlust.

They are probably thinking that it would be no problem if they "accidentally" killed Alek during their training.

Alek is handling it lightly.

Nevertheless, whether it is as expected of Sword Saints or Alek is simply holding back, occasionally one of them would land a hit on Alek.

It is the Longsword of Light.

Well they are still using wooden swords after all. The wooden swords broke the moment it hit Alek, giving him no damage. Touki really is a cheap technique isn't it.

However, the wooden swords of the Holy Sword Region sure are strange.

It seems like there is a metal like substance embedded in the wooden swords.

I guess it's to imitate a weight similar to that of a real sword.

Someone without Touki could be killed if they are hit in the wrong spot huh...

Ah, so is that why there are only Sword Saints in here.

Because if you're not at least at the Advanced rank or higher, you can't handle Touki?

[Now that I think about it, why did you accompany us this time Orsted sama?]

I suddenly asked Orsted who was sitting beside me in a quiet voice.

[I wanted to make sure I saw Jino Britts]

[Is that because you wanted to see if he was different from how he usually was?]

[Indeed]

Jino, with Nina by his side, is watching over the training.

Eris is sitting beside Nina.

She seems to be talking about something with Nina.

Seeing as how I can occasionally hear them saying words like Gal Farion, she seems to be telling her about the previous Sword God's final moments.

[So how is it?]

[He hasn't changed. He is still simple minded and stubbornly lives only for his own sake]

[Hmm]

[Jino in his youth was insecure. With that, he could have been easily swayed by Hitogami. But seeing him now, it won't be a problem to let him go]

[I see]

Staying neutral while not becoming an enemy.

Thinking about it, we can also call him our ally in a way.

It would be hard for him to become an apostle as well.

Though they are not moving in concern for the future, it's not like the other countries are moving vigorously as well.

It's more important that they do not become Hitogami's apostles.

Though there will be instances where some will become our enemies whether we like it or not.

If we start talking about that, there will be no end to it.

[I give up...]

One of the Sword Saints began to fall down with a large thump.

Immediately, the next Sword Saint shouts [I will be next!] and walks to the center of the dojo.

... But after becoming aware of it, all the Sword Saints were either sitting down or defeated.

The annihilation of the Sword Saints (2nd time today).

As expected of the North God Kalman III.

[.....]

Silence fell upon the dojo.

[— So I said in the end. [It's good to see a guy who lives freely be so strong]]

In such a situation, Eris' voice echoed out abruptly.

She raised her head in surprise when she realized her voice was louder than she thought.

Immediately closing her mouth, she intimidatingly dispersed all of the Sword Saints' gazes that gathered around her.

The Sword Saints lowered their heads and began to let out their voices in frustration.

Those gazes began to slowly head towards Jino's direction.

Leaving his pupils to do all the fighting, not caring for the honor of the Sword God Style, such complaints could be heard.

Jino is ignoring them with a carefree face.

It may just be that he hears such words on a daily basis.

[Is Sword God sama not going to join us in training as well?]

A Sword Saint asked after seeing the responseless Jino.

The man was the first to challenge Alek and had a huge bruise on his face after being defeated numerous times.

It was the same man that asked him to wait some time ago.

[I'm good]

[Why?!]

[It's not a matter of why. I requested them to train with you guys because you guys wanted it. If you guys are done, the training should be finished as well]

The Sword Saint's face distorted.

He began to shout while trembling, unable to bear the current situation.

[It was good back in the days of the previous Sword God! That man diligently protected the honor of the Sword God Style! When guys like these came, he didn't allow them to be so arrogant! I can understand why the Sword Emperor and his companions left as well!

Even though you are the Sword God, you refuse to show us a single demonstration! You do all the training by yourself, always flirting with that woman everyday! It's also the same when our enemies have come and asked us to be their subordinates! It's fine letting go of our past grievances and forming an allegiance with our enemies! But you just want to vaguely declare neutrality! Is that because you don't want to make them your enemies? What kind of person are you! What's the point of being a Sword God!]

The dojo became deadly silent.

Jino's facial expression didn't change.

He is as carefree as ever.

He is making a face that seems to ask [What is this guy going on about?]

However, the man's face turned pale as he seemed to realize that he said a little too much.

[The sword is an individual's property. Even if I win, it won't be your guys' victory and I won't be able to protect your guys' honor]

Jino said so briefly.

[I defeated the Sword God because I wanted to be with Nina. It's also the reason why I am here. I didn't have any intention of defending my honor or taking care of you guys either.

If you have any complaints, you can leave as well. I don't mind losing my

position as the Sword God, but if I give it to you guys, you will chase me out won't you? I don't mind leaving but right now is not a good time. My kids are too young]

The Sword Saints lowered their heads while saying [Ahh].

That's not it, why don't you understand, such voices could be heard.

Either way, the atmosphere is turning for the worse.

The Sword God and his disciples.

Looks like the situation won't be easily resolved.

I guess it means Jino is still too young.

If he doesn't resolve this situation well, he may create enemies within the Sword God Style.

[How about you just show them a demonstration?]

The person who broke the silence was Nina.

She began to separate her body that was leaning towards Jino and sat up straight.

[I want to see you fight as well]

[I get it. If that's what Nina wants]

Jino suddenly stood up.

As if his heavy like hips from before was a lie.

Was he perhaps sitting on it with his butt?

Either way, can we really say the situation is stable with this?

To me it seems to be unstable.

Will it really be okay?

[How about you as well Eris? Jino has gotten strong you know]

[... I got it]

Eris also got up after hearing Nina's words.

She is throwing something towards my direction.

After receiving it, I realized that it was her sword.

Demon Sword [Nodobue]

It was the previous Sword God's favourite sword.

Jino and Eris began to walk towards the center of the dojo.

Alek was there and shrugged his shoulders.

[So who is going to do it?]

[Of course, the weakest one is first]

Eris said so and pushed Alek aside.

Alek nodded his head in agreement and headed back towards where we were.

He didn't break off a single sweat.

I've never seen him sweat...

No, I've seen him do it in the Biheril Kingdom.

He was drenched in sweat.

[... The people here are no good]

Sitting next to me, he said so in a small voice.

[Despite trading blows with stronger people, they have no interest in learning]

[Even I could see that as well]

[Right? My grandmother's people are better than them]

Atofe's royal guards are a bit of a different story.

As I thought while looking, Eris held a stance with her wooden sword.

An upper stance as usual.

It's an attack stance.

On the other side, Sword God Jino held a sword drawing stance with his hips.

Talking about sword drawing, it reminded me of Ghyslaine.

But compared to Ghyslaine, he is much quieter.

Ghyslaine used to swing her tail while in her sword drawing stance as if she was timing her attack with ferocitiy.

Jino's stance had no such thing.

Similar to Orsted not too long ago, he is standing still in his stance as if time has stopped.

There is no opening.

[.....]

Eris began to close the distance.

The opponent is the Sword God.

If there weren't talks before this, this situation would have had my heart jump out.

Even if she gets beaten, she probably won't die?

It's okay right?

I should use my foresight eye just in case.

Well even if I use it, I probably won't be able to see his sword.

If it seems like she will be hit in a vital spot, will Orsted stop it before it happens?...

[If it's Eris san, you won't need a start signal right?]

[Mmm]

Eris nodded her head.

When I thought about that, the fight had already ended.

((Eris got hit on her dominant arm and fell down to one knee)) ((Eris' wooden sword flew in mid air and became stuck on the dojo's wall, ending the fight))
That's all I saw with my foresight eye.

And a mere second later, that became a reality.

[.....]

In my eyes, it seemed like Eris made the first move.

Before I could even confirm it, the tip of her sword already became an afterimage.

But in the end she still lost.

She lost in terms of speed and got hit on her dominant arm.

No, it isn't only her dominant arm.

Looking closely, her leg that was in the front had its toe bent in a weird direction.

Two sword hits.

Was it two attacks in a row?...

She broke both her arms and legs.

But Eris didn't stop moving.

This much wasn't enough to stop her.

Making a ferocious smile, she begins to charge with her other leg.

... That's what I thought would happen but she let go of her strength.

She gave up.

[Let's end it there]

The echo throughout the dojo belonged to Orsted's voice.

Inside the dojo, voices such as [Ahh] and [Splendid] could be heard.

However, that was only the minority.

The voices sounded somewhat bewildered.

[What happened? Did she dodge the first blow...?]

[The first blow was aimed at her ankle. That's why her toe...]

[Then how about the second blow?]

Such whispers could be heard among the Sword Saints.

Did the match finish? Did it not?

It was probably too fast for them to even come down to a conclusion.

However the result is clear.

Eris sat down drenched in sweat while the Sword God was standing with his wooden sword held loosely.

He said he will show them a demonstration, but the people that watched it didn't even know what happened?

There's no point of a demonstration at this rate.

The Sword Saints' facial expressions were stiff as if they were frustrated at themselves.

However, simultaneously, a feeling of relief began to circulate.

They probably think that with this, the Sword God Style's honor has been protected.

If the anger has settled down, it's a win win for me as well.

[As expected of the Sword God! The first blow was aimed at the front leg's ankle.

However, that first blow traveled the shortest possible distance from the ankle to the wrist. Hitting the ankle is okay, so is his opponent dodging the blow. Either way, his opponent's first attack would be delayed and allow him to land a counter to their wrist.

It is a feat that is impossible to achieve without the absolute confidence in regards to the speed of one's sword]

Alek said so in quite a loud voice.

So that the Sword Saints could hear him.

Hearing those words, the Sword Saints nodded their heads saying [I see].

Thank you very much for explaining, Alek san.

Though Alek sat down as if it was something obvious, he gave a little criticizing gaze towards Jino.

His face looked as if it was saying, [Tell them of such things if you are their master].

[If it was the old Eris san, she would have charged despite being in that situation]

[If this was the time to be stubborn, I would have done so]

[I see. As expected of Eris san]

Jino smiled a little and slowly nodded his head.

Eris suddenly laughed as well.

However, her brow is dripping with cold sweat.

She's not the type of woman to whine over a broken wrist and ankle, but it should still be painful.

I got up and rushed to Eris.

[Are you alright?]

[... I'm fine. Hurry up and use your healing magic. Don't try anything funny got it?]

[Yes ma'am]

I immediately chanted my healing magic and healed her bones.

I've already been warned beforehand, so I'll refrain from touching her chest or butt.

Despite being a mock battle, a strike strong enough to break the bones.

I tremble at the thought of such a strike hitting the head or the neck.

Well, Orsted is here as well, so as long as the head doesn't go flying off, I think it should be fine.

Nevertheless, the Sword God.

The previous Sword God was the same, but I just can't see his sword.

He's someone I don't want to turn into an enemy.

[How is it?]

[... He is amazing. It's frustrating, but I don't think I can beat him]

I asked her about her injuries, but all she talked about was the battle.

She is tightening her mouth as if she is really frustrated.

Though Eris gave birth to two children, she was diligent when it came to swordsmanship.

When thinking about that... No, she's just frustrated that she lost. She was always like that. She hates losing.

[Then, I shall]

When I brought Eris back, Alek got up with a cheery face.

But, he suddenly turned his head towards Orsted.

[Will it be okay Orsted sama?]

[I don't mind. Do as you wish]

Did Orsted possibly give Alek the permission to beat up Jino?

If Jino can't beat Alek, the Seven Great World Power rankings may change as well.

The man who declared neutrality, Jino Britts.

By defeating Eris just now, he settled down the frustration of the Sword Saints.

The Holy Sword Region will be able to protect its neutrality.

However, if the Sword God loses, everything changes.

Ignoring Jino as an individual, it wouldn't be surprising if the majority of the Holy Sword Region become our enemies.

What should I do? Do I have no choice but to stop them?

...

No, let's not say anything, since Orsted gave his approval.

I just have to think of a way to deal with the result.

[Very well]

Alek came to the front.

A spar using wooden swords.

Nevertheless, the North God and the Sword God.

It is no exaggeration to say that this is a battle between fellow members of the Seven Great World Powers. The current seventh rank right now is nothing more than a decoration after all.

Who will win?

Alek most likely has the advantage by having more experience.

Despite beating the previous Sword God, the Sword God is young and lacks experience.

In addition, Alek probably has a lot of pride as the North God Kalman III.

There's also the fact that he saw the Sword God's attack not too long ago.

[.....]

Alek, who took a center focused stance and Jino, who is in his sword drawing stance.

Who is going to start first?

Normally, the Sword God Style's Jino would strike first and the North God Style would counter that blow.

However, it feels like the opposite may happen as well.

[... Hmp!]

The first one to move was Alek.

I saw it this time.

A no motion thrust from the center.

However, Jino swung his sword in a speed that exceeded that thrust.

He unsheathed his sword as if he was matching the timing of the thrust sword's tip and deflected it a little... That's all I was able to see.

The next moment, Jino's sword vanished.

The next thing that was reflected in my eyes was the moment when Alek's left hand broke.

At the same time, Alek took a step back and there was a black line on the dojo floor.

He probably did the same move he used on Eris but this time attacking the wrist first and then the leg.

Alek grabs the wooden sword with his broken hand.

However, the hand that seemed to be broken repaired itself right away.

It's probably due to his Immortal Demon Blood.

Furthermore, his eyes burned with fighting spirit as if it was trying to say that the true North God Style starts now.

However, Jino stepped to the front despite the situation.

A terrifying fierce attack had begun.

Each time Jino swung his sword, Alek broke his arm and leg.

The broken bones immediately healed and didn't put Alek out of the fight.

However, that's all that happened.

Jino didn't allow Alek to go on the offensive.

Alek probably tried many different things.

However, it was clear to anyone that his attacks didn't reach.

[... I give up]

Before long, Alek dropped his sword.

There was no injury.

However, his clothes were tattered and the tip of his wooden sword was split.

On the other side, Jino was uninjured as well.

Though he was drenched in sweat, he was overwhelming.

I didn't think there would be this much of a gap.

To beat Alek who was so strong to that extent...

Wouldn't Jino right now be on par with the Great Powers? No, I mean he already is one of the Great Powers.

[Man, you are strong. It made me realize that there are always people stronger than yourself]

[You only have one hand and if this was a real battle, there's no telling who would have won]

[If we fought with real swords, I would be in pieces by now]

Alek easily admitted his defeat.

Jino used his sword drawing stance with a wooden sword that had no scabbard.

If it was a real sword drawing stance, it would have been even faster.

Therefore, there is the possibility that the gap would have been even wider if they used real swords.

[Now then...]

Alek held his wooden sword and came back to us.

Despite losing, he has an easy going expression.

Though he seemed to be a little frustrated... He didn't scream like he did during the time in the Biheril Kingdom.

He probably changed as well.

[... Hmm?]

When I casually looked around, I realized that everyone was looking at me.

Even Jino stood in the center of the dojo despite the fact that the spar was over.

Facing my direction.

[The seventh rank of the Great World Powers...]

[We can see the fight between two Great World Power rankers]

[Though I don't think Sword God sama will lose...]

[We might even be able to see the Dragon God Orsted's techniques]

I could hear the Sword Saints talking.

Eh?

Hmm? What's happening?

[Rudeus sama. Please show it to us. The power of the magic armor that was able to defeat me]

After hearing what Alek whispered to me, I suddenly spoke.

It was a speech I prepared in advance.

[Haha, everyone in the Holy Sword Region puts so much enthusiasm into their training as I expected! However, the day is almost over and I've gotten really hungry! How about we put an end to it here?!]

Everyone became disappointed.

And so, the greetings to the Holy Sword Region ended.

Although I've been called a coward by the Sword Saints, that is none of my concern.

The Holy Sword Region... No, Jino Britts will probably defend its neutrality until his death.

With that, I'm satisfied.

Chapter 22: Nina Britts

That day, Rudeus and his companions decided to spend a night in the Holy Sword Region.

They were lent a room in the true dojo and spending the night there.

However, Eris was called to Nina's house.

She was planning to stay with Rudeus and the others but she was fervently requested by Nina.

Nina's house.

That is to say, this is Jino Britts' house as well.

When Eris told Rudeus that she would be staying there alone, Rudeus worried and opposed her decision at the same time.

He was worried about the attitudes of the Sword Saints.

The Sword Saints were oozing bloodlust due to their involvement in the death of Gull.

Rudeus was most likely exposed to such bloodlust.

However, as far as Eris knew, the Holy Sword Region was always like that.

From the beginning, most swordsmen wanted to be seen as strong rather than actually becoming strong.

However, there was no one with a strong enough fighting spirit to ambush an opponent who came from outside the dojo.

If there was someone like that, he would be similar to Eris in her past.

Nevertheless, Eris left behind Rudeus and arrived at the Britts residence.

It was a bit distant from the dojo and was a small house unfitting of someone with the title of Sword God.

[Welcome. Come inside. Jino is out doing training at this time so he won't be

back anytime soon]

[T-thanks for having me]

Eris went through the doorway nervously.

Thinking about it, it may be the first time Eris has ever done this since she was born.

Going over to a friend's place.

She meets Isolte each time she visits the capital of the Asura Kingdom.

However, she never went over to her house.

Though she had been to the dojo nearby, it is different from [going over to a friend's house].

[Welcome back!]

The thing to greet the nervous Eris was a lively voice.

Making noises with their little feet, two children came out to greet them.

[Mother! Welcome back]

[Welcome back!]

On one side was a lively little boy. With a wooden sword in his right hand, his smile covered his entire face.

On the other side was a little girl. This one was still young and was running as if she was trying to catch up to the boy.

They ran all the way to the doorstep but after being surprised by Eris, they stopped in their tracks.

[This is my son Nel and my daughter Jill. Both of you, this is Eris. She is mom's friend]

[H-hi, I'm Eris]

After being introduced as a friend by Nina, Eris tightened her mouth and bowed her head.

The two kids' eyes widened after hearing of Eris' name.

[Red hair! Are you by chance the Mad Sword King Eris!?!]

[Red hair!]

Nel couldn't hide his astonishment after hearing that name.

As for Jill, it seems she didn't know what was exactly going on but decided to just repeat what was being said.

However, despite not knowing much about Eris, she seemed to be curious about Eris. With glittering eyes, she drew closer to Eris.

She is probably curious about her red hair.

Jill stretched her hand out at Eris' waved hair.

[Come on now]

[R-red!]

Jill said in a dissatisfied voice and started throwing a tantrum.

Seeing Jill act in such a way, Nel raised his voice in panic.

[No Jill! It's the Mad Sword King! If you touch her, she's going to eat you!]

[Gulp?]

Jill looked at Eris with frightened eyes.

Seeing such a scene, Eris laughed.

For some reason, the way these two kids acted reminded her of Ars and Sieg a few years back.

[I won't do something like eating you]

[... Your plan to make them put their guards down and eat them aren't you?]

The person who said such words was Nina.

Looking at Nina with question filled eyes, Eris tightly shut her mouth.

After seeing Eris make such an expression, Nina laughed and held Jill out to her.

[I'm just joking. Do you want to try holding her?]

[Mhm]

Eris receives Jill from Nina.

Jill was frightened but after realizing that Eris' way of holding her was more experienced than her mother, she quickly settled down.

Grabbing the red hair, she smiled saying [Red, tasty!] and put it in her mouth.

[Ah, Jill. You can't eat that!]

[... Uuu]

Being scolded by Nina, Jill quickly put it away from her mouth.

Regardless of the colour being red, it was still hair and wasn't delicious at all.

However, it was too late and Eris' hair became all sticky.

[Looks like I was the one who got eaten]

Eris said so in laughter as she brushed Jill's hair.

Nina looked at the scene in surprise.

As if she was saying "Is that really Eris?"

No, there was a time when Eris saw a similar scene play out in the Asura Kingdom.

Since Eris is a mother as well, she can act in such a way.

[Since you know that it isn't tasty, you can't eat it anymore okay?]

[Uhn]

As soon as Eris put Jill down, Jill began to jump around and ran back inside the house.

[I'm Nel Britts!]

And so Nel appeared as if him and Jill had switched places.

He greeted her using one knee.

[Mad Sword King! Your the real deal right! It is an honor to meet you!]

[... I'm Eris Greyrat. You can get up now]

[No! Uhm! Uhm! Since a long time I always...]

Looked up at Eris with glittering eyes.

With an excited expression, he tried to say something.

[Alright, that's enough. Nel. Are you planning to keep Eris at our doorstep? At least carry on after dinner]

And so, Nina stopped it there.

She put her head on Nel's head and patted him with a bit of strength.

[Okay...]

Nel lowered his head in dissatisfaction.

He wanted to talk to her more. If it was possible, he wanted her to help him in his training.

However, his mother will most likely not allow him to do so.

It's always been like that.

When famous swordsmen visited the Holy Sword Region, they were never allowed to meet him.

Leaving the dissatisfied Nel behind, Eris was invited into the house.

[Everyone changed didn't they?]

After dinner, Eris relaxed in the living room and began talking to Nina.

There is no sign of Jino.

He returned to his room with the kids after dinner.

Judging from the sound of the children's laughter, he seems to be playing with them.

[I would have never thought that he would become like this at all]

Nina, Eris and Jino.

Jino was the most inferior out of the three.

He always swung his sword with a sulken face and couldn't even reply to the Sword God's words.

Despite this, he reached the point of taking Nina as his wife and beating Eris in

a single blow.

When Eris realized this, she couldn't hide her astonishment.

Though she heard about it from Gal, actually seeing him in person made her think that his entire person had changed.

[Well you didn't even grab your sword at the dojo as well]

Nina is the same as well.

Despite the fact she was so deadset on becoming stronger.

She only looked at Eris in the dojo. Not only that, she also let Jino do as he pleased.

Back in the day, Nina would have never done such things.

[Well, I do have another child coming]

Nina said that as she gently touched her belly.

Thought it was difficult to tell from the outside, it is certain that her belly has swollen a little bit.

[Although Jino gave me the title of the Sword Emperor, it looks like I'll have to retire soon]

[Are you satisfied with that?]

Eris asked in contrast to the laughing Nina.

Though Nina dropped her gaze towards Eris, she showed a satisfied face.

[Yep... I'm satisfied. I do have feeling that I want to continue in swordsmanship. But it's weird, I have little regret. To me, my path to the sword may have been over after my loss to Jino]

[You lost?]

[Yep. Before Jino challenged the Sword God, he told me to become his if he beat me in a duel. So I fought hard and ended up losing]

[What a lovely proposal]

[I know right?]

Nina recalled those moments in her past and began to laugh.

Before that day, Nina thought about becoming the strongest swordsman, or even becoming the Sword God herself.

However, such thoughts disappeared in an instant.

Jino was just that strong.

He brought her down in a single strike as if all the effort she had put in were in vain.

Just like he did to Eris today.

If it wasn't Jino.

If he wasn't her little henchman back in her childhood, things may have been different.

She might have cried in frustration and become even more obsessed with the sword just like she did when she lost to Eris.

However, her opponent was Jino.

Jino became strong so that he could marry her.

And after beating her, he went straight to the Sword God and achieved victory.

Returning with the title as the new Sword God, Jino stole away Nina's lips and put himself unto her.

That day, Nina became Jino's.

In mind and body.

Though Nina claimed that she wanted to become the next Sword God, she knew that effort alone wasn't enough.

It is difficult with just effort or talent alone.

Even if you have those two things, it may be hard to reach such a goal.

Despite that, Jino worked as hard as Nina as if he was pulled in by her.

With such a mindset, he worked himself to a bloody pulp far surpassing Nina.

And so Jino arrived at it.

The state known as the Sword God.

The place that only a select few can hope to reach.

Therefore, Nina is thinking that Jino should receive a [fitting reward] as well.

The fitting reward would be as Gal Farion said, [letting him do as he pleases].

It's fine to let the Sword God can do as he pleases.

So even if Jino behaves in the manner he did today, she won't say anything.

Whether it is her thoughts or things she wants to say, Jino would hear her out.

But she felt if she did such things, Jino may become weak.

Nina couldn't bear being a hindrance to the one she admired.

Anyhow, Nina abandoned the sword and began to focus on another matter.

Parenting.

She was satisfied with that.

[How about you Eris?]

[I'm satisfied]

[Even though there are two other wives than you?]

[I don't really mind. It's quite normal. Though my father only had my mother as his wife, my grandfather had his hands on a lot of women. Even Rudeus' father had two wives as well.]

[Although I'm not a Millis believer, I can't think of someone having multiple wives]

Of course, Eris had her complaints as well.

She did think about what it would be like if she was Rudeus' only wife.

They would probably be always happy.

However, it would just be the two of them from day to night without bothering anyone else.

Comparing that to the current [Greyrat household], how would it be.

A home without Sylphy and Roxy.

There would be no Lucy and Lara, Sieg and Lili as well.

To make up for that, Eris would probably have more children, but it was hard to think of her having more children.

It's because she knows the present that she feels dissatisfied.

For instance, having a towel handed to her sweat drenched self after training.

Or when she enters the bath and forces the mud covered Lala into the bath right after.

And after washing the children, the new clothes and underwear that were placed for them to wear in advance.

Being able to pass her work to the others without feeling bad or sticking to them all the time, the right kind of distant feeling.

Sylphy and Roxy

Thinking about how life would be without the two of them was hard for Eris.

To begin with, she currently feels complete.

Watching the kids grow up is both fun and worth doing.

In a little while, she will teach them real swordsmanship.

Lucy is heading towards the path of magic and though Lala's path isn't clear, Ars is definitely going to go into swordsmanship.

How should I teach them? How will they grow up?

Even by just thinking about such things gave her happiness.

[Eris, you've changed as well]

[You're right]

[If it was the old you, you would have probably sent kids flying with your kick]

[How rude, I wouldn't kick them or do something like that]

[In the past you seemed to be like a child but now you are taking care of children]

[I've given birth to two children after all]

[How about a third one?]

[I think I'm good with children for now]

[Even that as well?]

When Nina asked, Eris' face blushed.

[... I, I wouldn't mind more of that]

That was Eris' true feelings.

However, the heavy and discomfoting feeling during pregnancy isn't something she likes at all.

[Nevertheless, the current Eris is so much easier to get along with]

[I too like the current Nina much more as well. Back in the day, you were kind of a bother]

[I guess so]

Nina in her past was sharp.

She always thought that she was the strongest and didn't care about anyone below her.

Though the thing that caused her ego to completely vanish had to do with coming into contact with Eris, her marriage with Jino played a major role as well.

[... Ah, thinking about it, Isolte also got married. Did you hear about it?]

Eris suddenly remembered one other person.

Isolte Cruel.

Currently calling herself the Water God Reyda, the one who stands at the top of the Water God Style.

[Yep, there was a letter telling me she was going to get married. But I couldn't go due to my pregnancy.]

[Then how about the news that she gave birth to a child?]

[That's the first time I'm hearing it. Is it a boy? A girl?]

[It's a girl. Since she can't give birth to a lot of children since she is the Water God, she sighed over the fact that she couldn't give birth to a successor that could carry their lineage.]

[I guess it's hard for her too. But her partner is a North Emperor right? Wouldn't he be upset over the fact that it is a girl?]

[Doga would never do such a thing. He is a good guy]

While talking, Eris brought up her memories.

Thinking about it, the person who voiced their objection against the marriage between Isolte and Doga the most was probably Rudeus.

Rudeus has the utmost trust in regards to Doga.

It's because his life was saved by Doga during the battle in the Biheril Kingdom.

His savior.

Simple, honest and someone who could be easily deceived, such was the man named Doga.

Hearing that Doga was going to marry a person who had high standards like Isolte made him say things like [Is she in it for the money?], [Is she just toying with him?] and it seemed like he was also going to do a secret background search on her.

Despite the fact Isolte helped him out as well...

Anyhow, it's impossible to think that a simple man like Doga who is trusted so much by Rudeus can be someone that would be upset that his child was a girl.

What Eris saw before was him putting his daughter who took after her mother on his shoulders and having a large grin on his face.

From cleaning, doing the laundry to even taking care of his kid, he always

seemed to take the initiative.

It was to the point that even Eris who didn't do much of the basic household chores asked Isolte, [Shouldn't you be doing something as well?]

Eris would never forget the mumbling Isolte who responded to her with deadpan eyes [He is much better than I am at it...]

[This time, it would be nice if our kids got along as well]

Eris nodded to Nina's words.

[You're right. It's also not a bad idea to send your kids abroad to study at the magic university]

[That sounds interesting. But Jino would probably not allow that. He's the type of person that wants his loved ones nearby at all times.]

[Then the kids would never be able to leave the Holy Sword Region]

[When that time comes, they'll leave as they please]

Having such a conversation with Eris, Nina laughed out loud.

This kind of conversation would have never happened with the old Eris.

[Hm?]

Eris sensed a presence and turned her head around.

At the entrance of the living room, there was a boy.

It was Nel.

In his hands, was a single book.

When he met eyes with Eris, he started walking towards her as if he made up his mind.

[Excuse me! Mad Sword King!]

[... What?]

[You ... You are acquaintances with this person right!?!]

The book he held out had the title [The adventures of the Supard race]

It was a book that Eris was very familiar with.

It was a book written by Norn, made by Rudeus and sold by both Zanoba and Aisha.

[Are you talking about Rujierd? Or are you talking about Norn?]

[Norn... Are you perhaps acquainted with the author as well!? Ah, of course, your last names are the same ...!]

[Norn is my sister in law. She is also Rudeus' younger sister]

[You are talking about the seventh Great World Power "Quagmire" Rudeus! Also known as the right hand of the Dragon God "Magic King" Rudeus!]

[Yep, you know quite well]

[My mother told me a lot about the Supard race and Eris san! I've heard stories about the Quagmire and the Mad Sword King from minstrels as well! I always wanted to meet you guys even if it was just once!]

Nel said as he looked up to Eris with glittering eyes.

To Nel, Eris was a character straight from the stories that were sung by minstrels.

In other words, she was a being from legends.

Unlike his father, he was very interested in [The outside world]

When he goes out into the outside world, he too wants to become someone who is sung by minstrels.

This was his dreams for the future.

[Well, that's an honor]

Eris felt like she was going to laugh.

But, she couldn't break the dreams of the boy in front of her, so she tightened her face and humbly nodded to him.

The image she was thinking in her brain was the ever formal Roxy.

[Rudeus and Orsted is here as well, so you can visit them before we leave if you want. The North God Kalman III is here as well.]

[Can I!?!]

Nel looked at Eris as if he was going to fly.

The seventh Great World Power and the second Great World Power.

After that, Kalman, who was famous in the North God heroic tales.

Beings who are on par or even surpassing his father who held monstrous strength.

He would have never thought that he would be able to achieve his dreams and meet such beings on a regular day like this.

[Uhm...]

Nel put his book behind his back and put his legs together.

[Mad Sword King sama has traveled around the world before right?]

[Yep, from the Demon continent to the Millis continent, and to the end of the central continent. I haven't been to the Heaven continent and the Bagaritto continent.]

[About your adventures... I would like to hear about them, is it okay?]

[Mine? Not Rudeus'?!]

[I would like to hear the Mad Sword King's stories!]

Eris smiled slightly and nodded her head.

Thinking back, she liked listening to such stories.

Constantly begging Ghyslaine, she heard stories about her adventures.

But she never thought that she would end up being the one doing the telling.

No, there were times when she told her stories to Ars and Sieg when they begged her to.

Even now, Sieg frequently listens to her stories.

However, this is a little different sensation from that.

This is because she isn't being treated as a mother, but rather as a hero.

But Eris didn't realize that.

She just felt a little elevated.

[Hmm... Then, I'll tell you about my adventures in the Demon continent]

Eris was starting to tell her stories about her past in joy.

Seeing her like this, Nina felt her mouth forming a smile as well.

[She really changed...]

She changed herself, and so did Eris.

A relationship that mutually lifted each other up, she couldn't say such a compliment out loud.

However, it felt as if she was getting closer to Eris.

When they first met, she was sure that they would never get along.

When Eris became a Sword King and left the Holy Sword Region, she respected her but couldn't call her a true friend.

But it's different now.

Though her respect for her has decreased, she is feeling something towards her she never felt before.

Though she won't meet her for a while, if she met Isolte she would probably be feeling the same thing.

For someone like Nina that didn't have a close friend starting from her childhood, it was a rare feeling.

[Eris]

[— And then, Rujierd suddenly killed the pet kidnapper... what?]

[Next time, let's bring our children and go meet Isolte]

Hearing such words, Eris blinked her eyes and suddenly nodded her head.

[Alright]

Jino became the Sword God and changed.

If the Sword God is like that, the Holy Sword Region will change as well.

Jino may even be unexpectedly defeated by an outsider.

That is the life of a swordsman.

Swordsmen are unstable beings.

However, this friendship will probably last for a long time.

Because I'm no longer a swordsman myself.

Such were Nina's thoughts.

2015 Mushoku Tensei Christmas Side Story: The Reindeer's Feelings

Winter.

December 24th.

At Magic City Sharia, a fierce snowstorm rages on.

Though the snowstorm is the same as usual this time of year, it has become 20 years since I, Rudeus Greyrat, had began to live in this town. As expected, I grew accustomed to life here.

「Tomorrow is Christmas, the great once-a-year event!」

The Christmas preparations are perfect.

Santa's clothes, the Reindeer's costume, and all the children's presents.

For Lucy, a magic wand.

For Lala, a dress.

For Arus, a sword belt with scabbard.

For Zeke, combat boots.

For Lily, a magical tool.

For Chris, a large stuffed toy.

Each one was prepared.

Presently they are sitting inside of a white bag, and being stored for safekeeping in the office armory.

When today's work has ended, I will return home and have a small party, afterwards, when it is time to come back to the office I will bring Helper Reindeer no.3 Aisha, and change clothes, right about midnight.

At the time when the date changes, just like last year, I will enter through the chimney while somehow dealing with Eris, and place the presents near the bedside of each of the sleeping children.

It's an 『Easy Operation』.

Though I narrowly avoided making a mistake last year, if it'll be easy, then it'll be easy.

At any rate, work's done, and everything is ready to go.
Reporting the plans to the president in the office, afterwards, I return home and the party commences.

Incidentally, to the wives, Aisha, and Lilya, it was already announced that they would be given their presents tomorrow.

Ah, I'm looking forward to it.
In the morning, the children will wake up with a present at their bedside.
Then they will be overjoyed and come and tell me all about it.
All the while, their faces will be smiling. It's for the sake of this day, that I live.

「President! I've just return-...」

There stood the King.
The King, with his overflowing aura of intimidation, was wearing a red gown.

「You've returned.」

「...Is there something going on? Today you seem somewhat...stylish.」

Though usually he is dressed in a white coat that exudes intimidation.
Somehow today he seems, Rich*. [TLN: Vibrant, katakana Ricchi] This absolutely gorgeous gown had white fluff sewn into the neck and hem.
Isn't that gown something you would expect to see worn on royalty?
I'm certain there is a king in a country somewhere that is probably wearing something like it as well.

「It's Ariel.」

I see, Ariel, huh...?
Ariel... what is...?
I have no idea what the President means by "It's Ariel."
Umm... Ariel at some point saw an opportunity, and sent it to Orsted.
Thinking about it, it's completely a bribe.
A "Let's get along after this, okay?" kind of thing.
...Well, it's not like it hasn't been done before already.

「Ariel-sama, you mean to say?」

「When I told her about the matter of today, I was told to go ahead and use it.」

「About the matter of today?」

「Yes, I'm certain it is today.」

「What is?」

Orsted knitted his eyebrows quizzically.

It's a scary face.

Absolutely terrifying.

But he's not angry at all.

Perhaps it's simply the face which conveys "Did I misunderstand?"

「.....」

With that expression on Orsted's face, from the sack beside his desk, he took something out.

It's a red hat.

A white feather is attached, probably it is something that a hunter might prefer to wear.

Orsted placed it on his head.

It gives off the feeling of a king saying "It's such a splendid weather for hunting, I think I shall enjoy a bit of falconry today."

But then, even a falcon wouldn't dare approach this king.

「I am Santa Claus.」

That's so wrong, Orsted-sama. As for Santa Claus, he is not accompanied by a hawk, but rather a reindeer.

No, just a moment, I need to calm down. Looking carefully, there isn't any falcon.

No no, that's not the point.

「Well, that is to day, This year's Santa is supposed to be me...」

「Is there anything you have a problem with?」

Looking around, there was a snow white bag that had been placed at one side of the office.

Though I don't know what's in it, it's very noticeable that it's full to the brim.

No way, could it possibly be filled entirely with red socks?

「What exactly... have you prepared?」

「It was no trouble. Though the memo I had received from you was a bit ... difficult. I was able to to get a number of good things that the children want. Furthermore, I was thorough about the clothes.」

While it matches the description perfectly, as usual there is just a little bit off about it...

「Do you mind if I look at the Presents?」

「I don't mind.」

Having received permission, I look inside the sack.
Okay.

They are normal gifts.

Though the overall designs are to the Dragon Race's liking, I have no objections. Though on that subject, while good they are also nothing like my presents.

「There shouldn't be any problems this year.」

「.....Good.」

...Really?

Did you really want to do it that much? To be 『Santa Claus』?

When speaking of Santa Claus, it's usually the Father's role to play. Since the the Father's role had been hijacked... wait, it's nothing other than the wish of Orsted.

It'll be fine, no matter whoever is delivering the presents, there shouldn't be a problem.

The point of it all anyway, is for the children to be delighted.

With both my and Orsted's presents, the presents have doubled. There's no way they wouldn't be thrilled!

「Understood.」

Then, I am the reindeer.

—

Midnight.

In the middle of the snowstorm, I climbed onto the rooftop with Orsted who

was wearing the red gown.

It's as cold as ever.

However, the Reindeer's costume this year is specially made.

At any rate, I made use of the fur of the 『Snow Hedgehog』.

The measures I took to protect myself from the cold are perfect.

「Rudeus.」

「Santa-sama. Right now, I'm not Rudeus.」

「...Reindeer, then.」

「What is it, Santa-sama!」

Santa Clause had been wearing a black helmet.

He was wearing the trousers and hat that I had already prepared.

However, it could not conceal the intimidating aura that would flow out.

「Is it necessary to enter through the chimney?」

「Yes, didn't I already tell you? 'Santa arrives by coming down the chimney.'
Conversely it can be understood as, 'Santa must not enter from anywhere other than from the chimney.'」

「Mm... Is...that how it is...?」

Orsted and I are having this conversation, while holding onto the chimney.
There are no signs of smoke.

This time, Aisha is operating on the inside.

She's a versatile girl. Cooperating with the clever Sylphy and Roxy, they will be handling the matter of Eris.

「Furthermore, you must not let the children see you. The fact it is Orsted-sama must never come out.

Although Santa exists, he must not ever be seen personally by anyone.
Existing but never being seen. Such a magical existence tickles the hearts of the children.」

「This is arranged all the way up to the clothes?」

「This is how it is.」

Well, in all probability, Lucy is really smart and may have already become aware.

Lala also despite appearances has a good sense of perception, and being able to seemingly chat with Leo, she might already understand as well.

Arus however, might not have hit upon it yet. Still..?

Zeke and the rest are still believers. No doubt about it.

「...It's a bit difficult. Being Santa.」

Honestly...

However, all the preparations were set.

Afterwards, I'll have Orsted plunge into the fireplace.

「While inside, Aisha, Sylphy, and Roxy will be your support. Best of luck!」

「...Are you not going to come?」

「I also really, really want to go, however... *fufu*, these horns seem to be unable to make it through the chimney.」

For the horns of the Reindeer's costume, I used the horns of the 『Great Anger Horn』.

The reason being that it was the closest form to a Reindeer's horns.

In other words, they're huge.

Our chimney's hole was already build reasonably wide.

However, it's narrow.

And I am unable to pass through it.

Though the reason for not being able to pass through was the same as last year, the reason for a reindeer to enter the house in the first place I've yet to discover, and it's too great a waste to not use the 『Great Anger Horn』's horn as it resembles a reindeer's horn so well, as well as reinforced protection from the coldness.

Kuu, for it to backfire now in such a place... kuu!

It's a disgrace to me, who carries the alias 『Right Hand of the Dragon God』 to have sent Orsted in by himself.

However, there was no other way around it.

To a Reindeer, its horns are its life.

Without them, It'd just be a deer.

「Please leave me behind, and continue without me.」

「Understood.」

Orsted quickly plunged into the chimney.

Damn fast!

I wonder if he didn't get his hair yanked on anything when doing that?

「.....」

A pitch-black night.

The lights in the neighborhood have already gone out, and the only thing in sight is the raging snowstorm.

Even though I said the Reindeer suit has increased resistance to the cold, a part of my face is exposed.

And the snow and wind mercilessly hit there.

My runny nose is now frozen.

Next year, should I add on a red nose and a muffler?

「.....」

It was an incidental thought.

I wondered, why was I by myself in such a place?

Today is Christmas.

Christmas Eve.

When speaking of Christmas Eve, it's the day when men and women consort together, to the point that it is called the sex night.

It's to the extent of that day giving rise to the phrase 'Christmas Baby.'

Then, I wonder why is it I am sitting alone on the roof watching a snowstorm?

Hmm, Did Aisha have this same feeling last year?

I guess I did a bad thing....

Oh well, I gave her a fashionable and expensive coat I bought later on, I'm probably not entirely forgiven.

「It's so cold...」

I wanted to return home already.

Though I want nothing more than to return, because my house is already below me, if I were to jump down from the roof and enter through the back door, I

could already be back inside...

「No, no.」

Until Orsted returns, I must remain on standby here.

It's possible that something might still happen.

Yeah, that's right.

In my own experience, a problem should occur soon.

There are six children this year.

However having said that, Orsted should probably find it difficult to act without being found out.

Nevertheless, he is better than myself at being covert, I am negligent and easily discovered.

Especially where Lala is concerned, as her intuition is particularly keen. It's not at all unusual, being discovered by her.

「.....」

I wait.

I have not heard any noise coming from inside the house, while listening in from the darkness of the chimney, I wait.

「*Sniffle*.....」

While snorting back up the snot from my runny nose that is like ice water, I wait.

Are you still not done?

If there is a problem, I must follow up immediately.

Though how exactly I would follow up, however, depends entirely on the situation...

「.....」

I don't hear anything.

I wonder, can sound from inside not be heard through the chimney?

I wonder what exactly is going on inside right now...

Are Aisha and the wives supporting him well, I hope?

「...Hmm?」

I hear a rustling sound coming from inside the chimney.

I put my ear to the chimney and try and listen properly to whatever it was I was hearing...

「You're in the way. I can't get out.」

The horns were suddenly thrust aside.

When I move my body backwards, Orsted appeared in that spot after coming out of the chimney.

「How did you do? Was there any trouble?」

「None, it's finished.」

「Eh?」

「Mission Complete.」

I noticed that the bag Orsted was carrying had become hollow.

「So everything is done?」

「Yeah.」

「Without any problems?」

「Yeah.」

「You weren't discovered?」

「Yeah. Being able to move around without being discovered by people is something I am very good at.」

「...Ah, that's right!」

I see.

It's done and over.

Without incident.

「Ah, well then, shall we return to the office for a moment?」

「Yeah.」

No problems.

That is... right. This should be a happy thing.

But, what is it exactly?

This feeling of being unsatisfied. This empty feeling...

「.....」

Did I really want to be the one to do Santa...?

—

The next day.

After last night's snowstorm, the skies have cleared up.

It's unusually fine weather for the northern lands.

As if the weather clearing was a sign, the children had full-on smiles floating on their faces as they came from their rooms.

Each of them were holding their presents in their arms.

「Look, Papa! This is exactly what I wanted!!」

「Mama! Look what I was given!! 」

「So awesome!!」

These are the voices of my delighted children.

I thought this as I listened to them.

This is the good life.

For the sake of being able to hear this, it was worth bearing with that cold, lonely night.

「I see, I see. Everyone was good, weren't they?」

But, next year I will be the one doing Santa.

Even if Orsted says he wants to do it, I will have to insist that I do it.

If by chance Orsted says he wants to do it no matter what, though I'd be a bit reluctant, it would be war.

「Now then, It's about time I head out to work.」

At the very least, for the sake off greeting a peaceful new year, I will go to work today.

Thinking so, I finished eating breakfast, and went back to my room to change clothes.

Then, when I opened the dresser drawer, and went to take out some socks, I noticed it suddenly.

There was something put into the socks.

When I pulled them out, it was a pair of white gloves.

Furthermore, the feel of these gloves, I'm sure it's something I have touched somewhere before...

Ah, that's it.

It's made from the same material as the white coat Orsted is always wearing.

「.....」

Probably, while Orsted was inside, he found the occasion to slip these in here.

「... But, I'm not a child, you know?」

Though I mumble that, I felt happy to receive this for Christmas, despite being old enough to know better.

Well, there's no helping it then, I'll take it as a bribe.

Next year, if Orsted says he wants to by all means, I may just hand over the role of Santa to him.

Or so I thought.

—

The very same day, when I went to the office, Alek proudly boasted "I was given a reward from Orsted-sama!", but that, is a story for another time.

This story is fiction.

There is no Christmas in Mushoku Tensei.

Rudeus and Alek don't get any presents.

Nanahoshi Gourmet

Chapter 23: Yaki Onigiri

When I woke up, I saw someone coming out from the dim bedroom.

“Someone” may not be the right word.

It was Sukeakoto of Time.

He had left the room in silence after checking if I had woken up.

"Fua..."

I stretched my body while letting out a yawn.

"..."

My name is Nanahoshi.

Nanahoshi Shizuka

A high school girl that came to this world from another world.

I’m what you would call a Tripper.

Though I experimented with teleportation magic to get back to my own world, it seems that I won’t be able to return anytime soon. Staying in this world for too long will result in me dying by an illness, so to diagnose it, one of Perugia’s subordinates known as “Sukeakoto of Time” used his time stopping ability on me and made me skip time, only waking up once a month. Such is my current situation.

Waking up only once a month.

One day is short.

After taking a shower, eating and then hearing about what has been going around in the world, the day ends.

Furthermore, for me, a single year is only 12 days.

In the blink of an eye, years pass by.

If it was the old me, I would have been worried about every little thing.

However, these days I live in comfort partially thanks to Rudeus.

... That's how it is but I'm worried about one thing.

It's Sukeakoto's time stop ability.

There's is one huge flaw to this ability.

"... I'm hungry"

I become extremely hungry when I wake up from the time stop.

According to Perugia, it's because I'm a person from another world without mana and he believes that it is not a big problem.

Whether it really is a big problem or not, I'm starving after I wake up.

My stomach growls.

The feeling of not eating something for an entire day assaults my stomach.

Even today, I felt like I was going to collapse if I didn't eat anything immediately after I woke up.

However, the meal comes later.

I got up from my bed and exited my room.

The place I'm headed for is a place where I can wash myself up... in other words, the bathroom.

Taking a bath is a must if I want to stay at Perugia's castle.

Perugia loves cleanliness.

Within this vast castle, there is not a single piece of trash on the ground.

Naturally, a human living in this castle must also be clean as well.

If you aren't clean, you will be stared down by Sylvaril's unpleasant gaze.

Therefore, I walk straight towards the bathroom and wash my body while holding back my hunger.

Holding a towel and soap in my hands, I wash my body while rubbing my half asleep eyes.

This is the least amount of courtesy that one must provide to stay in this castle.

After taking the shower and getting cleaned up, I sat down on the floor in hunger and put strength in my legs to face my room.

The bedroom is my own room that was assigned to me.

In there is someone.

In there maybe Rudeus and Zanoba or Sylphy and Aisha, waiting to greet me.

In terms of how frequently they visit, I guess Rudeus would be number one.

"Good morning, Nanahoshi"

It's Rudeus again today huh.

I relax after seeing his body.

He is the existence that comes to satisfy my hunger.

Though I don't know if he knows I have a hunger problem or not, he always brings me food.

Karaage and curry, cream puffs, those kind of things.

After reproducing the food from our world, he brings them here.

Occasionally he brings something weird, but instead of it tasting bad, it makes me laugh as it is something different.

"Sniff sniff..."

Today, I could smell a sweet scent coming from within the room.

Ahh, this smell... Ahh.

I wonder what it is today...

"Gulp"

I accidentally swallowed my saliva as it built up inside my mouth.

My stomach growled.

I want to eat it already.

As if my body was being controlled by my stomach, I started to approach Rudeus.

"Good morning Nanahoshi"

Rudeus moved towards the table near the window and put seven objects on the table and began to heat them up.

They had a triangular shape.

With a fan on his left hand and holding a brush and a pair of long chopsticks on his right hand, he began to roll the things and brushed them with something.

When he used his brush, a dark brown liquid close to the colour of black began to ooze out.

Afterwards, when he started brushing the seven objects, a sweet aroma filled the room.

I can't be wrong.

That black liquid, must be soy sauce.

"Today is going to be yaki onigiri"

I sat down on my seat as if I had agreed to his words.

As I moved the table, the outside view could be seen from the window.

Perugius' most proud garden and white clouds.

A superb scenery that could only exist in a fantasy world expanded itself.

No, I guess if you go to certain places in my old world you could see the same thing... such as the Machu Picchu.

If I remember correctly, wasn't there a Machu Picchu in Japan as well?

"..."

When I looked, I could see a tray that was covered with cloth on the table.

When I removed the cloth, I could see a bunch of white onigiri placed side by side.

As I expected, there is no seaweed.

"Yaki onigiri... it's my first time eating it"

"Huh? You've never eaten one before?"

"We didn't really make onigiri back at home"

"Ha~ ... onigiri huh..."

Rudeus nodded with a vague face as if he understood or didn't understand what I was saying.

But, I do have some experience with such a face.

That's a face one makes when they feel a generation gap.

But it was just my house, other kids made and brought onigiri all the time to sports events or field trips.

It's not a matter of difference in age.

"Well, here you go"

With a small sound, a single plate was put in front of me.

On the plate were two steaming onigiri.

"There's also miso soup, are you going to drink it?"

As Rudeus said this, he brought up a huge pot towards the table.

When the lid of the pot opened, the smell of miso gently filled the room.

Although I didn't reply to Rudeus, Rudeus poured the contents of the pot into a wooden bowl as if he understood what my reply was going to be anyways.

As for the reason why the bowl was made of wood, it's probably due to his obsession with them.

When the wooden bowl full of miso soup was placed before my eyes, my mouth filled with saliva as if I had already tasted it.

Of course, drinking miso soup in this world isn't a first time experience for me.

Rudeus had already brought it with him multiple times before.

It isn't like before when the dashi wasn't put into the soup at all either.

I think that each time he brings it, it gets closer to perfection.

I'm pretty sure that Sylphy and Aisha back at Rudeus' home is working hard on it.

"Itadakimasu"

I met my hands together and bowed.

As I was about to start eating, I hesitated for a moment.

To my side was a knife and fork, and chopsticks as well.

I guess he is being considerate in letting me eat in whatever way I please.

"..."

But, I reached out with my bare hands intentionally.

I know that it's bad manners.

However, when thinking of onigiri, an image of using one's hands to eat it pops into my head.

It may be that I simply admired the way of eating onigiri with bare hands.

I gripped the onigiri with my fingers and put it into my mouth.

A crunchy texture.

As I chewed the onigiri, the fragrance of soy sauce filled my mouth.

Furthermore, the place that I chewed on the most was the hot white rice.

As the flavors of both the white rice and soy sauce met together, I could sense something tinkling on the corner of my brain.

I took a bite into the contents in my mouth once more before I swallowed it down.

"...!"

At that moment, I could feel a strong sensation inside my mouth.

There was something inside of the onigiri.

It's sour.

Is this perhaps...

"Umeboshi?"

"The other day, I went to visit Ariel and saw her boasting about her garden. In there was a tree that resembled a Japanese Apricot tree. So just to try things out, I took a few of its fruits and realized that it was spot on"

"Heh..."

After this, Rudeus began telling me the origins of this tree, and how Ariel said to him "Are you planning to poison someone?" when he was taking the fruits, but

I had no interest in his stories.

Enough of that, this is umeboshi.

It was something I never really ate in my world.

I didn't really like it either.

But what is it? This sour taste that is unique to the umeboshi.

Despite my mouth being full of food, my saliva overflowed like a tsunami.

Inside my mouth, my saliva was gathered and the white rice, umeboshi and the soy sauce flavored burnt rice began to blend together.

White rice and umeboshi, I've now found out the reason why these two are usually eaten together.

Before I swallowed the contents in my mouth, I chewed it three more times.

As I implolitely stuffed the yaki onigiri into my mouth, the soft rice, the soy sauce flavoured burnt rice and the umeboshi's sour flavour met together.

Ahh... it's so good.

"Hnn..."

As my throat got stuffed due to swallowing it all down, I drank the miso soup to wash it down.

The miso soup's thin taste helped wash away the flavor of the plums and the soy sauce and refreshed my mouth.

"Fuu..."

After taking a breath, I keep repeating the pattern of eating and drinking.

As I did so, a single yaki onigiri disappeared in the blink of an eye.

It was delicious.

"The next one is going to have okaka in it. It wasn't made with skipjack tuna

so the taste might be different, but it is still delicious."

Okaka.

I've eaten that many times before.

Especially in kindergarten, it was a regular dish that went with an egg on my rice.

To reproduce that taste...

I want to eat it already.

"Uh Nanahoshi, listening to me while eating is fine but"

"Huh?"

"I have a little thing I want to discuss with you"

I felt a bad premonition.

He sometimes brings something to discuss about.

Whether it is something about his children or having a fight with his wives and wanting to know what he did wrong.

Of course, I'm being helped by Rudeus as well.

Work as hard as you can, say what is on your mind.

I tell him to do such things and think of it as giving him some advice.

However, sometimes he discusses things that I give a proper answer to.

For example, telling me that he made a doll that looks exactly like me and that it has lewd functions.

Or worrying that him and Slyphy are having a hard time making a third child.

Although I give him some advice during these times, it doesn't seem to help.

Because I'm nothing more than an inexperienced female high school student.

"What's up?"

"To tell you the truth, Lucy..."

Lucy.

Rudeus' oldest daughter.

In my memory, she was a little girl with long ears and a lot of energy, with a little shy side as well.

It feels like I haven't met her in a long time.

I wonder how old she is right now.

I wonder what the heck Lucy did.

She didn't become a delinquent by any chance did she?

Maybe it's something like Lucy rode on her horse every night in the alley, doing nothing but fighting and after all that gathered all the nearby thieves and made a Greyrat alliance with whom she set sail with to take over the nation and to top it all off she is currently being oppressed by some army and sitting in a juvenile detention center...

"She is going out with Clive kun"

"..."

Clive.

If I remember, he was Cliff and Elinalise's son.

I guess he is Lucy's childhood friend.

"Sorry but how old are those two again?"

"Lucy is 14 and Clive is 12"

14 and 12.

Clive is a bit young...

But it's by no means too early for him to go out with someone.

Though when I was 12, I never dated or had a broken one sided love before.

But, thank god.

It seems that today won't be about a heavy topic.

"Are you against it?"

"I'm not particularly against it"

"Then what's the problem? You want to discuss it right?"

"No, I just thought that it would nice to say something to her as a father"

As a father?...

"Are you planning to say something?"

"No, how should I say it. I want to tell her that love is fine but she should also focus on her studies as well. Or telling her to use contraception as well"

"You shouldn't tell her about the last one. It's important but it's way too early for that talk"

"Ah okay"

But if I was in her position, what would I do.

Being over 13 years old, dating someone in my class and having my father nag at me about it.

If it was me, I wouldn't like it.

I would say that I know all that already and would rebel according to the situation.

I don't know how Lucy would take it.

But Lucy is probably working hard to be recognized by Rudy.

Though it's been a long time so I don't know how she is now...

But since she is a diligent child, she probably is still working hard on it.

What would happen if she stopped to catch a little breath and her father started scolding her for it?

When she would usually work hard and the moment she took a little break, her father would tell her "Keep studying".

... She would probably hate it.

Then right now it is better to just leave her alone.

But at such a young age can a kid in love come back to studying and sports?

Since I don't know much about love, I can't say much.

It's just that since there are so many people in society who go crazy about it, wouldn't it be hard for her to focus on other things as well?

Hmm...

"Well, I think it's just a matter of how you say it"

"How I say it?"

"Something like telling her to date in moderation until graduation"

It's a matter of how one says it.

Outright denying it without listening or showing too much interest into her relationship isn't good.

Also, there's the fact that the Greyrat household sends their kids to the magic university at the age of 7.

When they graduate, they will be an adult.

If that's the case... well, it's a matter of being responsible for one's self.

"Ah I see. Moderation huh. That's a good word. I got it, thanks"

Rudeus sighed with a relieved face.

It seems like he received good counselling this time.

Though I don't know what the result will be.

"Well, eat up. What will you have for the next one? Ume or okaka?"

When I looked at my plate, all the okaka ones were gone.

It seems like I ate all of them during our counselling session.

I couldn't feel the taste at all.

Although there remained a bit of a delicious aftertaste.

Alright, next time I'll make sure to savor the taste more.

"Okaka"

"Alright"

Rudeus used his brush to smear the white onigiri with soy sauce and put it on the charcoal brazier.

After a few seconds, the smell of the burnt soy sauce floated in the air.

It's a fragrant and a little sweet smell.

Even though I had just finished eating two onigiri, saliva gathered around my mouth yet again.

"To cook food inside, it seems that you lack common sense"

And so, someone entered the room.

A silver haired man with a splendid white coat wrapping around his body, it was none other than Perugia.

Sylvaril could be seen behind him as well.

"Ah, my apologies. But not to worry, we are using ventilation"

"It's fine. Although you seem to lack common sense, my Chaos Breaker is strong when it comes to heat as well. With this much, not even a stain can remain"

"I thank you for your leniency"

"Hmph"

Snorting in response, Perugia had a seat.

"What are you eating?"

"It's called yaki onigiri. It's a dish that consists of cooked bunched up rice coated with soy sauce or miso"

"Hmm, it sounds like something that an adventurer would eat"

"It's a dish for the common folk after all"

"Guess I'll try one"

Perugia is always like this.

He would say things like how the cooking style is shabby or that it looks bad.

But he never refuses to eat it.

Rudeus responded with the usual "Yes, I know" and put one of the two cooked onigiri in front of Perugia.

He also put one in front of me.

"Do you eat it with your hands?"

Perugius looked at my dirty hands and frowned.

"Eat it however you like"

Hearing Rudeus' reply, he grabbed a knife and fork and cut the onigiri.

He then put the cut onigiri into his mouth with his fork.

It's an elegant conduct.

It puts my dirty fingers and mouth to shame.

"How is it Perugius sama?"

"Hmm..."

Perugius frowned after a bite.

Was it not to his taste?

"Perugius sama, there's no real need to force yourself to eat a dish from another world..."

Said Sylvaril.

Even though he hasn't even tasted it before...

Something as good as this...

"No, this is a taste that I've missed for some time"

"A taste you've missed?"

"During the Laplace campaign, among the soldier's provisions, there was something like this. It was a hardened bread which you would soak in a sauce and cook until it was a little burnt"

"..."

"Because of the needlessly strong taste, I can't say that it tasted good, but it does take me back"

Perugius narrowed his eyes and looked outside by the window.

Out there was a garden full of multi colored flowers and a sea of clouds.

I don't know what kind of thoughts Perugia holds in regards to his past.

He talks about his heroic past frequently but never really talks about his sad memories.

"Rudeus"

"Yes?"

"It had a good flavor"

"Thank you very much"

I ate my okaka onigiri as I saw them exchanging words.

Ah.

I forgot to savor the taste again.

Well, it was delicious for sure.

I wanted to savor the taste more deliberately.

However, with this I've eaten three.

I'm slowly getting full.

A full stomach is a palate's worst enemy.

No matter how delicious something is, if you eat it with a full stomach, the taste falls.

Especially for dishes with a strong flavor.

One more.

That is most likely my limit if I want to savor the taste.

Should I do okaka as my last one?

But I've already eaten two of them.

Would ume be better?

Wait a second, how about putting half of each in it?

No, the cooking time of the ume and okaka is different...

"Well, it's time to wrap up"

As he said this, Rudeus lifted the kettle from the table.

He put his hands on the exterior of the kettle for a few seconds.

When he did this, steam began to come out from the kettle.

At first I wondered what he was doing but it seems like he is using magic to warm it up.

I can't smell the contents of the kettle.

I wonder what's inside.

"When you eat yaki onigiri, this is always the finisher"

Rudeus put the cooked onigiri into a container and began pouring the contents of the kettle inside it.

From the gentle sweet smell, I could tell what was inside the kettle.

It was tea.

However, it wasn't the aroma of black tea.

It was green tea.

"Ochazuke!"

I shout out my thoughts.

"I see that you had tea"

"Well... The ingredients for both black and green tea is the same"

Though I never had yaki onigiri in my original world, I never knew you could eat it like this.

Ochazuke is also a standard desert after a meal.

Even with a full stomach, you can fully savor the taste.

"Here. Give it a try"

I grabbed my chopsticks and began splitting apart the yaki onigiri that was soaked in the tea.

The cool aroma of the green tea increased my appetite.

"Itadakimasu"

I began to stir the ochazuke wholeheartedly.

The green tea softens the burnt rice and neutralizes the strong flavor of the soy sauce.

The smooth texture goes down my throat.

Furthermore, if you cut the ume inside the onigiri, it becomes a umezuke.

If it's this, I can eat as much as I want.

"Fu"

Before I knew it I had eaten everything.

When I was eating I thought I could eat as much as I wanted but after finishing it, I am left with a full stomach and a feeling of satisfaction.

As I look around, I can see the garden and clouds.

It feels as if I went on a picnic and ate until I was full.

It's happiness.

"Perugius sama's garden sure is beautiful"

As I mumble to myself, Perugius does not reply.

With a face that seemed to say "obviously", he slowly drank the ochazuke.

Rudeus stayed silent as well as he ate the uncooked onigiri.

"..."

A moment of silence.

Rudeus would at times drink his miso soup and the sound of him drinking echoed throughout the room.

This island has a lot of trees and flowers.

However, there are no birds.

Other small animals are non-existent as well.

For some reason, that gives off a strange feeling.

In such a place, we are eating onigiri and drinking miso soup.

This situation seemed like an extravagant moment of good luck.

Even though the cause of me coming to this world was due to an unfortunate event.

But such happiness during times of sorrow is a blessing.

"Rudeus"

"Hm?"

"I'm definitely going to go back"

"Do your best"

If I do go back to my world without any problems, I'm going to travel and see the world.

Taking onigiri with various ingredients inside.

With a container full of miso soup.

With a small bottle of soy sauce, I'll go to a place where cooking is permitted and cook and eat my own yaki onigiri.

Such were my thoughts.

TL Note: Now that we got that out of the way, there were some many different foods and such in this chapter. I kept most of their names in their Japanese names because they are literally called that way in English.

For some clarification:

Umeboshi = Japanese salt plums

Ume = Japanese apricot.

Okaka = Dried, fermented and smoked Skipjack Tuna.

Onigiri = Japanese rice ball

The rest you can probably google yourself. Thanks for reading~

Chapter 24: Miso Udon

My name is Nanahoshi.

Nanahoshi Shizuka.

Due to various circumstances, I am currently freeloading in Perugius's Castle, Chaos Bringer.

With his subordinate's ability, waking up once every month is how I live right now.

This lifestyle is the result of my "I can't return until I achieve a certain something in this world" theory.

But let's leave that aside for now.

In my previous world, there was a fairytale called
"Sannen Netarou"

TL Note: The name means "He who slept for three years"

In a certain village suffering from persistent drought, there was a man named Netarou.

He did not do any work in the village and merely slept through his days for three years, raising the ire of the other villagers.

One day, Netarou woke up and moved gigantic boulders from up
in the mountains. Every single day, he threw these large boulders into the
river, finally changing the
course of the river towards

the drought stricken village. Because of this, the crops in the field
were

able to receive water and the village was saved from its long years of drought.

He wasn't merely sleeping. All this time, he was thinking about solutions to

save the village.

Such was the story.

I am doing pretty much the same thing as him.

At least that's what I think.

However, what I am doing is not something noble like helping the people of this world. Instead, I am merely doing this so I can return to my previous world.

Of course, I am indebted to the people of this world. If they are in trouble, I would want to reach out and help them.

Leaving that aside, it is time for lunch.

My stomach is empty today as well.

It is growling with a "guu guu" sound, requesting me to eat food even while I am showering.

I am now a hungry wolf.

Whether it is Little Red Riding Hood or seven goats, I can probably devour them all.

Nonetheless, being assaulted by such intense hunger every day (actually every month), I might slim down so much that I look anorexic.

When that happens, people might not recognize me when I return to my previous world and I don't want that, which is why I must eat my fill today as well.

While my mind was filled with such thoughts, I arrived in my room. A pleasant smell reached my nose. At the same time, the figure of Rudeus preparing something at the table came into my view.

"Aah, good morning Nanahoshi."

"Morning."

Placed in front of Rudeus is a pot made from earth magic, being heated up by something that looks like a portable stove. A nice bubbling sound reverberates in the room.

It looks like we will be having *Nabe* today.

Soups like this with many ingredients cooked together are not uncommon in this world. Normally, the ingredients are thrown into the pot as is, resulting in a soup with a strong pungent stench and horrible flavor. Even when made by a capable chef, the soup would turn out to be something edible, but remain unappealing to the appetite.

However, what's this aroma of miso that tickles my nose?

This smell cannot be produced unless the flavor of the dashi stock is properly brought out and the miso paste is dissolved completely. Ah, my stomach is growling again.

"What is it today?"

With a passable greeting, I arrived at my seat. If we are using fire in the room, won't we get scolded by Perugius? I recalled that I forgot to warn Rudeus about this, but it should be fine. Perugius will also be eating here anyway.

"Today we'll be having... here, look."

Rudeus lifted the lid from the pot, revealing the dish beneath the steam.

As expected, it is a dark brown soup. What looks like chicken meat, spring onion and mushrooms with a white egg in the center are bubbling in the soup. Furthermore, beneath all those ingredients lies something white, long and thin. White noodles! That means this dish is probably...

"Udon?"

"That's right, it's miso udon."

Miso udon!

"You made udon noodles?"

"Yup, I had some difficulty explaining what "noodles" are to her, but actually making these is not that difficult."

It is mainly Aisha that re-creates the dishes from our previous world.

After listening to explanations regarding the cooking method and the finished product from Rudeus, the dish is re-created through trial and error.

The miso udon we are having today is also a result of that process.

"Alright, eat it quickly before it becomes soggy."

While saying that, Rudeus skillfully transferred the miso udon into a bowl using a ladle and chopsticks before serving it. The miso soup's aroma drifts into my nose. Saliva fills my mouth as I immediately grabbed a hold of the chopsticks.

"... Itadakimasu."

Just when I was about to eat the udon noodles, I stopped.

I put down the chopsticks and took up the spoon.

I decided to first taste the soup.

I cannot start eating the noodles before first tasting this rich miso soup.

"..Nn"

The flavor of the dashi was splendidly brought out in this soup.

It is most likely seafood based.

A deep miso flavor is layered with the taste of the dashi, and there is a mellow aftertaste that is hard to describe.

At that moment, my stomach started growling again, as if it's hurrying me to eat solid food.

Stomach: *Please give me solid food now.*

Me: *Please stop rushing me.*

I can hear these words resounding in my mind.

Me:

Calm down, I'll eat it even without you telling me to.

With that, I once again picked up the chopsticks.

I picked up the soft udon noodles floating in the soup. Even though I am confident in using chopsticks, the udon noodles that I haven't had in a while broke up and fell back into the bowl. Unfazed, I picked up the remaining pieces of udon, blew on them and slurped them up.

"..Nfuu."

This is definitely udon.

It may be due to the quality of the wheat flour used, but the taste is a little different from what I'm used to. However, this is without a doubt, the taste of udon. It is so soft that I can swallow it without chewing.

Ahh, it's so nostalgic...

Speaking of which, I've eaten this kind of udon a long time ago.

My mother prepared it for me when I was down with flu back when I was still schooling. The udon I had back then was bland, and the lack of flavor was made worse by my illness. Compared to that, this udon is delicious.

"Fu..."

I took a breather after I swallowed the udon noodles.

Next up on the menu would be the spring onions. Spring onions in this world have a strong raw stench.

They taste as if they might contain poison when eaten raw.

Maybe because these spring onions were being cooked in the miso soup for a long period of time, the stench is almost non-existent.

The more I eat, the more I can taste the unique flavor of the spring onions; it doesn't make me sick at all.

Rather, it was as if every bite is preparing me for the wave of flavor coming from the next mouthful of udon.

The taste of the udon noodles and spring onions come together in perfect harmony, bringing the tastiness of the miso udon to the next level.

What about the mushrooms?

From the appearance, it does not look like shiitake or enoki mushrooms at all, it is unique to this world.

The bright colors make it look poisonous. Perhaps this mushroom was once a monster.

I picked up a mushroom with my chopsticks and put it in my mouth. I savored the texture of the mushroom by chewing slowly. The intense umami flavor burst out in my mouth – it tastes a lot like shiitake mushrooms – No, this is definitely shiitake. Yup, let's just call this mushroom shiitake.

Before the aftertaste of the mushroom faded, I quickly took a bite of the chicken.

As usual, this world's "chicken" does not taste exactly like chicken as well. But how do I put it, maybe because it was simmered in the soup for a long time, this meat melts in my mouth.

The umami flavor of the shiitake and chicken, coupled with the miso, spring onions and the udon noodles.

Truly a match made in heaven.

I continued chewing and swallowing this delicious meal.

The ingredients are cooked so tender that I can easily swallow it and it goes into my stomach without much resistance at all. Before I knew it, the bowl was empty.

"...Seconds."

"Alright."

Rudeus scooped out more udon noodles from the pot.

I started eating the moment the bowl was refilled with the noodles.

Spring onions, udon, chicken, udon, mushrooms, udon, re-fill.

I kept eating in this cycle without talking.

I probably did not eat miso udon all that much in my previous world.

Even if I went to an udon restaurant, I can't imagine myself ordering this at all.

I would have ordered another kind of udon.

But now that I know how tasty this dish is, things would be quite different.

Miso udon would be the first thing that comes to mind when talking about

udon. I might come to utter such a phrase like I am some udon connoisseur, even though I really know nothing about udon.

"Is it good?"

"Yes."

But I cannot let my guard down.

Although Rudeus would feed me good food, this comes at a price.

Sometimes, he would come to me asking for advice.

"By the way Nanahoshi, listen to this."

Even though he asks for advice, the topics are usually not serious.

Things like:

How Ars is so popular at school, and how he's worried that Ars would lay his hands on girls here and there.

How Sieg

has become very muscular, and would corner Rudeus with his powerful sword strikes during practice-duels.

How Lucy and Clive started going out, and are often seen going on dates in town.

How childish Lara still is, frequently playing pranks on people.

Trivial stuff like that.

"I arm wrestled Sieg the other day."

"Arm wrestle?"

"Yeah, and Sieg's arm has gotten really big, just by grabbing my hands it feels as if he was about to crush it."

"If I am not wrong, Sieg-kun was taken in by Alexander was it? As a disciple right?"

"That's right, North God III. I don't know if it's because he was a great teacher or our Sieg has talent, but Sieg is mastering the North God Style at a shockingly fast pace. Alek also commended his learning speed."

"Hmm... So what happened to the arm wrestling match? Did you win?"

"I won. As luck would have it, I was wearing my Magic Armor at the time. With that, I protected my dignity as a father."

"I wonder if you really protected it..."

Looks like the topic today is trivial as well.

But I cannot relax yet.

Depending on the circumstance, Rudeus will start off with light-hearted topics like these, before going into heavy topics. When that happens, he will sneak peeks at my facial expression before addressing me with "Hey, Nanahoshi" sheepishly.

"Hey, Nanahoshi-san... On another topic..."

Here it comes.

The way he says it with a difficult expression.

Furthermore, he addressed me with a -san suffix.

Today's topic is going to be considerably heavy.

"It is not really an easy thing for me to say..."

"...What?"

To be honest, I don't want to talk about it.

Once it starts, I would become so exhausted that I cannot really enjoy the taste of the food.

But I am someone who is always treated to such a feast by him.

It isn't good to ignore someone who has been taking so much care of me.

"I may be wrong about this..."

"Uh huh..."

It's coming.

What is it going to be about?

"... Haven't you been gaining weight lately?"

"Eh?"

Something unexpected.

"Me?"

"How should I put it, you kinda look a little plump compared to how you were like last time."

I touched my cheeks instinctively.

Did I really become plump?

I haven't been looking into the mirror lately, so I am not really sure myself.

There are mirrors in this castle, but unfortunately it is not as common as having it in every toilet like back in Japan.

They are so uncommon that I couldn't find even one mirror within walking distance.

As expected, there isn't one in this room either.

I have gotten fat...?

Really? No, but, it can't be.

My body is in a weird state in this world.

I don't age, my nails and hair don't grow and I don't even have periods.

So getting fat should not be possible.

Even so, I still get hungry.

If I consume food, I will still excrete waste.

Meaning, the food will be digested and distributed as nourishment to my body.

If I can get hungry, it implies that this nourishment is used up.

In other words, at least for a time, this digested food stays in my body.

So... I did get fat?

The food is not only used to maintain my physical state, but also stored in my body?

Even though I get so hungry in the morning?

"Ahh, my bad. It's probably rude to say something like this to you."

"Not really..."

"If you are worried about it why not I make a weighing scale? It won't be able to display accurate readings, but it can at least do something like compare my weight to yours. How about it?"

"I-I don't need it"

I can't imagine myself getting fat.

After coming to this world, I shouldn't have been able to lose or gain weight.

The hunger I feel when I wake up must be because I used up all of the energy gained from my previous meal.

That must be it. Yes.

That's why it must be his imagination.

It's not like Rudeus sees my face every day.

It's only about once per month.

He should not be able to notice how different I look.

No, isn't it the opposite?

Isn't it precisely because he does not see me every day that he notices the changes in my appearance?

"..."

Thinking back, ever since I started freeloading in this castle, I have only been eating and sleeping.

When Rudeus started making Japanese food, the amount I ate increased as well.

I used to only eat the bare minimum to survive, but lately I have been devouring food till I am bloated.

Me being constantly on an empty stomach may have further fueled my appetite.

But when I think about it, my stomach will get empty even without me doing anything.

Illustrations of Sannen Netarou also often depicted him being fat...

So, I really got fat? With this lifestyle...

"Rudeus. Even while having three wives, it seems like you still do not understand a woman's feelings."

While I was trembling from the thought of possibly becoming fat, Perugius entered the room with those words.

It seems like Sylvaril is with him as well.

"A woman's feelings... It seems like I am still inexperienced."

"Appearance is everything to a woman. If she had put in everything for her hair, makeup and clothes, to point out changes in her weight is an action of utmost insensitivity. I believe you should have prepared a portion for me as well, right?"

"I see. Here you go."

Perugius sat at his seat as if it was the most natural thing to do and requested his portion of the meal.

Unlike what he said, I am someone who isn't all that conscious of my weight though...

It's just that I thought there was no way I could become fat, and got a shock when I found out the truth.

... Even so, I think I wouldn't want to get fat.

More importantly, wouldn't your pure white coat be stained if you slurp on the udon noodles?

Even if it isn't curry udon, the color of miso udon soup is still quite dark.

Did Rudeus not notice this?

"Oh yeah, do you know how to eat this?"

Rudeus did not notice it at all and said that instead.

In this sense, it is indeed true that Rudeus does not understand a woman's heart.

But on whether paying such attention to clothes is part of having a woman's heart, even I have no idea.

"You bastard, are you making fun of me?"

"My apologies, it is because we do not really see things like noodles in this world."

"They were lost to the war with Laplace. There might be remnants of such food remaining however..."

"Oh, I see."

Due to the war 400 years ago, humans were practically annihilated aside from those in the Asura Kingdom.

That is why the food culture has perished alongside those who died in the war.

Even so, it wouldn't be bad if some part of it remains.

"Having said that, it has been a long time since I ate this as well. I only had this once during the war. Furthermore, it is the first time I have it with these ingredients and soup."

Perugius picked up the fork while saying that.

Isn't it very difficult to eat udon with a fork?

As I was about to point that out, Perugius skillfully curled the noodles using the fork and put it into his mouth with majestic grace.

There was no way for the soup to splash anywhere.

It looks like I was worried for nothing.

"Hmm, the taste is good."

"I am relieved."

"But this is too soft. What I ate before had more elasticity to it, isn't this food for the elderly?"

Miso udon noodles are almost always soft.

This is because it is simmered in the miso soup.

However, after hearing Perugius say that, I suddenly had cravings for normal udon noodles as well.

Not that I have any complains with miso udon, it's just that I also wanted to have a taste of springy udon noodles.

"I knew that you would say that."

While saying that, Rudeus took out some noodles that was in a sack.

He came prepared.

"It was boiled once before, so it might not have that much body to it. But I think it has the texture close to what you desire."

Rudeus lowered the noodles into the pot to boil it as he said that.

The noodles bubbled in the soup.

Watching that scene, I started to recall a noodle texture different from what I ate a moment ago.

"Can I also get a refill of that?"

"Why of course, eat up."

With that reply, I once again leaned forward holding my empty bowl.

—

I ate my fill today as well.

My appetite is fully satisfied.

The hungry wolf returns to the forest with a bloated stomach.

I have been "gaining weight" huh...

I asked to be brought to see a mirror after the meal.

To be honest, my figure did not change that much from what I remember.

But maybe, as I thought, I got a little plump?

Perhaps due to it being right after a meal, my stomach is protruding out.

"..."

It's not like I absolutely hate becoming fat.

Even so, I would prefer to maintain my current figure.

It's fine if it's just a little bit, but I would hate it if I were to become so fat that I was mistaken for someone else.

"... I should exercise a little."

I told myself just before I went to sleep.

Chapter 25: Sandwich

My name is Nanahoshi.

Nanahoshi Shizuka.

Due to some circumstances, I am currently running in the garden of Perugius' Castle, Chaos Breaker. The cobblestone path circling the castle is definitely not easy to run on. Even so, I will keep running. That is because I need some exercise.

Recently, I have been running like this every single day. The castle is surrounded by this beautiful garden and its appearance changes every time I wake up. Different flowers bloom every month, resulting in a rotating assortment of colors. If I were to wake up every day instead of once every month, I would be able to fully appreciate this gradual change.

"Fuu..."

Three laps around the castle.

That takes up just about an hour. Of course, it's not like I was continuously running for an hour, I don't have the stamina for that. If I have to take small breaks, I will. Initially, I was plagued with muscle cramps due to my sedentary lifestyle, but lately, this level of activity rarely results in cramps or sores. This must be a result of my body becoming more physically fit through training. If I can train to become fit, then it logically follows that a lack of activity will make me fat.

Anyways, if I am running with this frequency, I shouldn't be able to get too fat. Not that I am against getting fat. It's just that I don't want to be mistaken as someone else when I return home.

After catching my breath, I took a shower, changed clothes and returned to my room. I wonder what's on the menu today. What will Rudeus bring me today? I pushed the door open while having those thoughts in mind.

"Hmm...."

"What's wrong? Your chances of winning are slim now. Surrender."

However, Rudeus is nowhere to be found.

In his place are Zanoba and Perugius. Between them sits a table on which they are playing a game similar to chess. The chess pieces are well-crafted, such that minute details can be made out even at a distance. This set was probably taken from Perugius' collection, or bought somewhere by Zanoba.

As for the state of the game, it seems like Zanoba is being outnumbered. Even without looking at the board, you can tell that Perugius is winning by looking at Sylvaril moving her wings with pride.

Come to think of it, this world also has a game like that.

How nostalgic.

Back in middle school, I was really into games like chess and shogi. I used to go to a dojo-like place in the neighbourhood to play from time to time. In fact, I won quite a lot of those games. I stopped all of that once I got into high school, though.

"Please wait a moment. In the Shirone Kingdom, we fight to the last man without surrender."

"You do not have the makings of a ruler it seems. Even if you lose the war, you can rebuild the country as long as troops remain."

"You mean there existed a country rebuilt with just surviving troops and a dead leader?"

"How ignorant, Zanoba Shirone. It is the very country you were born in. Your country descends from one that was annihilated in the war with Laplace."

"I see... It is no wonder that the downfall of my country occurred in my generation."

Leaving aside the contents of the conversation, I am more interested in what they were eating while playing their game of chess. Two slices of white bread cut in either squares or triangles, with something in between. From what I see, that something consists of green and yellow stuff. Regardless of what is put in between the two slices of bread, the name of the dish remains the same.

It's sandwiches.

"Long time no see, Zanoba."

"Ohh, Nanahoshi-dono! Good morning. It has really been a while."

Zanoba has really gotten old as compared to the Zanoba I remember. Much of his hair has become white and his face is filled with wrinkles. He is now over 40 years old, from what I have heard. Zanoba is officially an old man now.

"So it's not Rudeus today, huh."

"Shishou¹ has been busy recently, you see. Remember that incident?"

"Ahh..."

Some time ago, Rudeus consulted with me on a dreadfully serious topic.

It was regarding the elopement of Ars and Aisha.

As for what happened during his consultation, it's so heavy for someone like me that I did not know what to say at all. All I could do was to give vague responses or keep quiet. He brought in donuts on that day, but I could not appreciate the taste at all. In the end, more than half of the donuts remained unconsumed. It seems that the issue is still unresolved.

"Even so, as you can see, Shishou has prepared food for everyone here. You should eat up too, Nanahoshi-dono."

"...Itadakimasu"

I sat beside Zanoba. Although only a third of the sandwiches remain, there are still a variety of fillings to choose from. There's one filled with Tamagoyaki², some with what looks like smoked meat and grilled fish, as well as those with white filling – probably potato salad.

For now, I reached out and grabbed the Tamagoyaki sandwich.

It may have caught my interest because of its bright yellow and green colors, but it was also due to nostalgia. As my family did not make onigiri, my lunch boxes were often packed with sandwiches. Among them, there were always Tamagoyaki sandwiches.

Thick cuts of tamagoyaki and a lettuce-like vegetable are held between the bread slices. I held it with my bare hands and started nibbling the top part of

the triangle. The inner side of the fluffy bread has gotten soft from the moisture. Biting into the lettuce-like layer, I feel a slight crunch as a subtle bitterness spreads in my mouth. As my teeth sink into the softly fried tamagoyaki layer, saltiness hits me with a slight hint of sweetness, balancing the bitter taste of the lettuce. A salty aftertaste is left in my mouth, intensifying my urge to take the next bite.

Just when I was about to take a second bite, the tamagoyaki slipped out of the bread and landed on my plate, possibly because it was too thick. I picked the tamagoyaki up with my fingers, returned it in between the bread and took my second bite. This may be bad table manners, but I don't care. While wiping my fingers with a handkerchief, I took my third and fourth bite.

Bread, lettuce and eggs.

Even with just three ingredients, this wonderful balance of flavor is achieved.

There's also me being hungry from the physical activity, as I instantly finished eating the first sandwich.

"Still, it is quite unbelievable, what happened. Even wise people would act so rashly."

"How is that unbelievable? That is human nature at work."

With a snort, Perugia moved his chess piece.

Zanoba reacted with a "Ugh" to Perugia's move, and reached out for a sandwich while staring at the chessboard.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Humans are the most foolish when they desire something. They fail to do something they are usually able to do, and they take the easiest and most irrational route. Don't you remember such times, yourself?"

"Yes, I do."

"As expected. This chessboard is the perfect demonstration of that. You left yourself defenceless, trying to take my king. You throw away your troops needlessly over and over again with those reckless attacks, all the while not realising that the king was just a bait."

Perugius has an overwhelming advantage in the chess game.

Zanoba lost more than half of his army and is being surrounded by Perugius' troops.

"Subsequently, after experiencing your defeat in this match, you would probably stop taking baits that are dangling right in front of you. Even if you are tempted by your desire, you would be able to control it. However, after a few matches, you would fall for the same trap again and choose the simplest way to attack. That is human nature, and humans are foolish."

"So you are saying that no matter how smart one is, he will repeat the same foolish actions?"

"I don't know about that. But for someone that always makes the optimal decision after considering the cost and benefits, which route she chooses when desire takes over... Wouldn't that be a sight to behold?"

"I see, is that why Perugius-sama would not tell Shishou about Aisha's whereabouts? If that is the case, pardon me as I would have no choice but to say that you have bad taste."

"Hmph, I have no intentions of moving my subordinates for such a trifling matter."

It seems like Rudeus had sought help from Perugius.

If only Perugius had swiftly found Aisha, I would not have felt so needlessly depressed...

"Though you say that, doesn't Perugius-sama also have desires?"

"Hou?"

"Your obsession with Laplace, isn't that in Perugius-sama's own words, utter foolishness?"

"Zanoba, are you trying to say that I am a fool?"

"My apologies, that is not my intention..."

"Fine. You are right, I am foolish by nature. But Zanoba, a person can make wise decisions with full knowledge that they are foolish."

Having an increasingly strong urge to let out a heavy sigh, I reached out for my next sandwich. Being wise or foolish... What a drag... If I think too much about what Perugia is talking about, I would definitely not be able to savor my sandwich.

"And even fools come in many varieties, for example—"

"Hey, how long are you guys gonna go on about that topic?"

When they heard that, both of them exchanged glances.

Zanoba adjusted his glasses while Perugia snorted in displeasure.

"My apologies, this isn't something we talk about over good food. Perugia-sama, let's leave it at that."

"Hmph."

The conversation ended and both of them returned to playing their game in silence.

I should also go back to having my meal.

Next, the ham sandwich.

It had a rectangular shape, made to fit the shape of the ham.

This is probably the Greyrat household's homemade ham.

When I hold it in my hand, it can feel that the ham is covered in spices.

What was this called again... Yes, it's pastrami.

The ham itself is cut thickly, giving it a juicy appearance.

Lifting up the bread a little, I can see that the inner sides of the bread and the lettuce are slathered in a brown-colored sauce. It looks incredibly delicious.

Without a second of delay, I opened my mouth wide and bit into it.

The bread felt a little harder compared to the previous ones. I feel the body of the ham and the crunchiness of the cucumber and lettuce, hitting my teeth with a nice resistance. If I were to describe the tamagoyaki sandwich as an experience of softness upon softness, then this sandwich would be an experience of denseness upon denseness.

On top of that, the sauce accentuates the meaty taste of the ham, stimulating my taste buds. The spicy taste in my mouth gets stronger with every bite.

"Looks like the spice used on the meat came from the Migurd Village in the Magic Continent..."

Just as I was thinking that aloud, Sylvaril came serving tea.

Her displeased expression might be because this spice came from the Magic Continent and was produced by the hands of a Magic Race.

Perugius' subordinates do not take a liking to people from the Magic Race.

Maybe her displeased expression was because of what Zanoba said as a rebuttal to Perugius or even due to me ending their conversation prematurely.

"Is this okay?"

"“Even if its made by the Magic Race, an ingredient is still an ingredient, they are not the Magic Race itself.” was what the generous Perugius-sama said. Through Rudeus-sama, we hold some of this spice in the castle's kitchen."

Ultimately, Perugius prioritised his own desires and took the easier way out. This spice was purchased from the Migurd Village by Rudeus. In the end, his money is going right into the pockets of the Magic Race.

"..."

Anyways, I couldn't care any less about that.

I took a sip of the red tea and gave a sigh of relief.

Let's see, which one should I eat now?

The potato salad sandwich looks nice.

"Check. Surrender now, Zanoba."

"Hmmm... Looks like I have nowhere to escape. I surrender."

"If you had said that 20 moves earlier, your troops would not have died in vain."

While talking, Zanoba added salt to his vegetable sandwich and ate it.

So you can eat it that way too. When I saw that, I start to crave the sandwich

with the tomato-like vegetable filling.

"As expected of Perugius-sama, you are too strong. I cannot imagine myself winning."

"That goes without saying. I have been playing this game for several hundreds of years. As if I would lose to humans who cannot even live past a hundred years."

... No, let's go with the other sandwich.

The menchi-katsu³ sandwich, which is the only other option left. Right, katsu sandwich it is. While I am still hungry, I want to eat something with more of a bite to it

"Nanahoshi, how about it? One match?"

"No thank you, I'm good."

"I see. Not only did you cut our conversation off, you would also refuse to have a match with us."

"No, that's... ah..."

Just when I was about to reach out for the katsu sandwich, Perugius took it and bit into it. That was the last one.

"..."

If you looked at the sandwiches on the plate, four flavors of sandwiches were lined up together. In other words, there should have been four katsu sandwiches. They were placed closest to Perugius. There were four people in the room. Theoretically, if each person were to eat one type of sandwich each, I should have my share of that katsu sandwich... Sylvaril wasn't even eating this time round...

"So Zanoba, shall we have a rematch? Or Sylvaril? You sometimes lose on purpose so I can't really trust you..."

"I will do it. Please teach me the rules and how to move the pieces."

Hearing me say that, Perugius broke into a wide grin. Seeing that expression, I finally understood. He probably ate my katsu sandwich predicting that I would

do this. I pushed Zanoba aside and sat in front of the board, in full knowledge that I thoroughly fell for his ploy.

—

4 wins and 11 losses.

That's my score for today.

More losses than wins.

At first I lost three games in a row, which allowed me to learn the rules and features of this game. As it seems like classic shogi tactics are often being employed, I used the double check and open check techniques like it was the most natural thing to do.

After the fourth match, I learned the trick to smoothly build an encirclement of the enemy. Winning became much easier, but I haven't fully grasped how to attack properly, resulting in a fragmented offense. It ended up with me trying to fend off various offensive moves from Perugia.

While doing that, I attacked with shogi tactics similar to the Climbing Silver and the Fourth File Rook. Having these attacks in my arsenal, my scores with Perugia were about 50-50, with me winning the final match.

The moment Perugia lost the last match, his face was filled with frustration, despite having more wins than losses.

Losing four times to a beginner player like me must have damaged his pride as a perfectionist. Being able to see his twisted facial expression, I will leave aside my resentment of not being able to eat the katsu sandwich.

As game was ending, I finished up the remainder of the sandwiches. I had my fill today.

Satisfaction.

It is too bad that I couldn't eat the katsu sandwich. I'll request for it again next time.

"My apologies Nanahoshi-dono, it seems like I have done you a disservice today."

As he was about to leave, Zanoba said that with an apologetic expression. I wonder what he is apologising for? We didn't really talk today right? Ah, he was observing at the side the whole time I was playing the game with Perugius, occasionally giving me advice. We did talk.

If it's not about not talking to me, then it must be regarding that topic.

"I should be the one apologising."

I may have appeared a little irritable today, I shouldn't have stopped their debate.

"If you have any message you want to leave to Shishou or anyone else, should I pass them on for you?"

"Let's see... To Rudeus, I pray that his issue is resolved soon. Can you tell him that for me?"

"Understood. Well then, I will return again, next time with Shishou and Cliff-dono."

Exchanging those words, I saw Zanoba off.

It was good that Zanoba came for me today.

There was a day where neither Rudeus nor Zanoba, not even Perugius came to visit me. I spent that day quietly in a daze, alone in my room. My mind wandered off and was filled with negative thoughts, making me needlessly depressed.

Compared to that, I would much rather be having conversations, even with the kinds of topics discussed today. Lately, I think I have come to better appreciate the value of having liveliness and company. It's not like I absolutely need company, but with no one around, it feels lonely.

"Alright, please come again."

I replied Zanoba, feeling thankful for his words.

However, while having a meal, I would prefer to talk about brighter topics.

With such thoughts, my eyelids grew heavier as I fell asleep.

Some translator notes:

1. Master/Teacher in Japanese.
2. A type of fried egg, folded into a cuboid shape: [Video link](#)



3. Fried breaded patties with minced meat as the filling: [Video link](#)



Chapter 26: : Takoyaki

My name is Nanahoshi.

Nanahoshi Shizuka.

A high school girl hailing from another world. In other words, one of the teleported. Currently, in preparation for the fated day, I am living in Perugius' castle while skipping ahead in time. To be blunt, it's a decadent life consisting mostly of sleeping right after eating.

I started doing some exercise as I've been putting on a little weight lately. Mostly doing jogs and stretches. Also, under the instruction of Sylvaril, I am doing some hand-to-hand combat training. Apparently, I don't have much talent in that.

Now then.

Today, as usual, I started exercising the moment I woke up, and got criticised by Sylvaril. Something like, "focus your killing intent onto your enemy when you attack". As someone who is just doing this for the sake of slimming down, there's no way I can do that. My mind is so occupied with thinking about burning fats that I have absolutely no space for killing intent.

Speaking of which, the effects of exercising are amazing. After my daily routine, my stomach goes completely empty. It lets out a nice big growl, begging for meal time to come.

Now then, who will be visiting today?

What will they bring for me?

I returned to my room holding those thoughts.

And then, sitting there at the table was Rudeus. Lately, when I see the figure of him, I feel a sense of relief.

A pleasant aroma of some sauce and bonito flakes drifted in the air. When I focused my eyes, I saw a bunch of brown spheres piled up like a mountain on a plate.

Looks like we will be having Takoyaki¹. With this realisation, saliva rushed in to fill my mouth.

"Gulp"

Swallowing my saliva, I sat down on my seat. I want to eat it now.

"Morning."

"... Ahh... Good morning... Nanahoshi..."

Unfortunately, while I am relieved that Rudeus came to visit, there is one downside to it. Sometimes, he comes to me asking for advice. Things like "This and that happened in my family, what do I do?".

Of course, I am indebted to him. To my utmost limits, I would think about the matter and give my thoughts on it, hoping that whatever I said could be of some help.

However, sometimes, he brings up unbelievably heavy topics. In those times, Rudeus will have a look on his face like he was about to die, and greet me with a voice like he was about to die. Yes, just like how he is right now.

Not only that, the Rudeus today is lying flat on the table, still carrying that dying look. Without a doubt, the topic today is going to be awfully dark.

He sluggishly propped his own body up, and faked a smile.

"I made some Takoyaki today. There's Takoyaki sauce and mayonnaise. The bonito flakes aren't made from bonito, but it smells similar right? The octopus inside has a poisonous color but it's safe to consume, so you don't need to worry."

"...Thank you. I-It looks very good."

"Anyways, have a bite. I think it turned out pretty well this time round."

Let's enjoy it before the dark topic comes.

In that spirit, I picked up the takoyaki with the toothpick sticking out of it and ate it.

It looks like its fresh off the stove, but a little time has passed. It's hot but not to the point where it would burn my tongue. There's also the savory smell of

the somewhat salty sauce and sweet mayonnaise. When I bite into the soft exterior, the runny filling rushes into my mouth. The burst of flavor hits every part of my mouth. Delicious.

By reflex, I took a second bite. Amidst the runny filling, I bit into something with a stiffer texture. It's the octopus meat. I don't have a tongue so sensitive that I could taste the flavor of the octopus, but there is a huge difference with or without it. It has been a long time since I ate octopus meat, was it ten years? At the very least, I haven't had any octopus since I got teleported into this world.

"-Hofuu.."

Maybe because I stuffed my mouth full, such a sound leaked out. When I breathe in, the smell of the food passes through my nose and a subtle aroma of spring onions and red ginger² remains. This smell further intensified my hunger, making me reach out for the next takoyaki.

"Is it good?"

"It's good."

"I see."

While he also snacked, Rudeus watched me voraciously devour the takoyaki. It's embarrassing to be watched while eating... but I can't stop moving my hands.

This takoyaki has a nostalgic taste. How do I put it... it tastes cheap. The surface doesn't have any crispiness to it. It does not seem like tenkasu³ or yam was used in making these.

Still, it tastes nostalgic.

Ah, I see. This tastes like the takoyaki mom bought me in the supermarket food court. The taste of temple festivals.

It definitely isn't cheek-meltingly delicious, but I never would have thought that I could eat something like this just a few years ago. There were times where I thought about how I would never be able to eat takoyaki again.

I am on the verge of tears.

"Hey, Nanahoshi. It'll be great if you can listen to this while you eat."

Ah.

"I have something I want to talk to you about..."

Here it comes.

"...What?"

To be honest, I don't want to hear it. The topics Rudeus talks to me about are too heavy for me. Though it is true that I have been in this world for a while, I am but a mere high school girl in the previous world. Even if you ask me about things like family relationships, I don't have any decent answers for you.

"Actually... Lucy..."

Lucy.

Rudeus' eldest daughter.

The most outstanding of the kids, who has her act together.

That outstanding Lucy, what exactly has she done? It can't be that she's laid her hands on her little brothers... That incident with Aisha and Ars should have been resolved... Please spare me from another heavy topic.

"She brought Clive home the other day and told me, "I am going to marry this person.""

Clive-kun.

Ah, that should be Cliff's son.

To Lucy, he should be a childhood friend.

If I recall, he moved to Milis.

How old was Lucy again?

"... Sorry, Lucy-chan, how old is she now?"

"18."

"And Clive-kun?"

"16."

Ahh, they have already reached that age. They were only 14 the last time I heard about them. It might be due to my lifestyle now, but time really flies.

If I am not wrong, one is an adult starting from 15 years old in this world. Those young children have grown into splendid adults. Come to think of it, Lucy has surpassed me in age, not counting the years spent in this world. Wait, but-huh?

"Before this, you told me that Lucy-chan and Clive-kun were already dating right?"

"Yeah."

Even though Clive-kun moved, if they kept in contact and marry when they reunite, it wouldn't be strange. It might have been decided between them without the knowledge of Rudeus. Then is it a problem on Clive-kun's side?

"Then, did Clive-kun not get employed?"

"Nope. He became a priest of the Milis Church. Having good grades, he was already someone of status when he was dating Lucy. He is indeed impressive."

"...Then what is the problem?"

Did Rudeus get into a big fight with Cliff or Elinalize without me knowing?

If it's that, then I can at least be the mediator.

"Ah, it's not really a problem but... Somehow I am the only one that didn't know."

"About what?"

"About Lucy's wedding... Notwithstanding Sylphy and Roxy, they even consulted Eris. But I was the only one who didn't know and it came so suddenly."

"Isn't that normal? Aren't meetings with the bride's father all like this?"

Even I would probably do the same thing. I wouldn't go out of my way to report every detail about my dating life to my parents. There's nothing to hide, but until the decision to marry is confirmed and finalised, there wouldn't be anything to inform.

"Is that how it is?"

"That's how it is."

"Then that's fine, but... When she dragged Clive-kun to me, saying she would marry him, I asked about many things like Clive-kun's future prospects and their goals. Hearing their answers, I felt that the way they think is indeed inexperienced, but steadfast and realistic. When I was in admiration of how much he resembled Cliff-senpai, Lucy suddenly said, "This probably doesn't seem like much to Papa.". For a joke, it sounds a little~ too sarcastic and felt a little sulky. Even though I didn't think like that at all... It might be that I-I... am hated by Lucy..."

Rudeus has a face on the verge of tears right now. Even though he is a full grown adult, why is he making such a pitiful face? Regarding his relationship with his children though, he has completely lost his confidence ever since a few years ago.

"That's why I told you to properly talk to your children."

"I talked to them! Properly! Yeah... I intended to do that... but the kids, when they talk to me, they somehow use honorifics and are very stiff... it's different for Lara and Chris though..."

"Ahh..."

It might not seem like it when he is interacting with me, but it seems like Rudeus plays the role of a strict father in his household. If that's the case, then it would probably wear on the children. My family wasn't like that, but one of my friends' was. She was always complaining that she couldn't talk to her father about anything.

Thinking about it, ever since I graduated middle school, I don't think I have been properly talking to Dad. It's not like I have a reason not to, but I was going through puberty. One becomes an adult at age 15 in this world, but puberty comes at around the same age. There's nothing out of the ordinary going on here.

"Hey Nanahoshi, what should I do?"

"...What you told me just now, it would be good if you tell that to Lucy as it is.

"Clive-kun is someone who is reliable and grounded in reality, I wish you both happiness.""

As far as I know, Lucy did not hate Rudeus.

On the contrary, she should be working hard to meet Rudeus' expectations.

Of course, I might be wrong as I haven't met her for years.

"Ahh, I see. Okay. But how should I bring it up to her... perhaps in a bath?"

"In a bath? You are joking right? Seriously?"

"I'm joking. Sorry."

"Maybe while eating... No, invite both of them to a meal, wouldn't it be good to talk it out over the three of you? And then talk about Lucy-chan's good points. Maybe something like, "She is my pride and joy and I will never forgive you if you bring her unhappiness." to Clive-kun wouldn't be bad? You can even talk about her weaknesses and say something like, "My daughter is like this but please take care of her." I think that would be good."

"Hmm, you are right. I'll do that. But wouldn't it be better not to talk too much about her weaknesses?"

"... Her good and bad points, it would be better if you talked about everything. At times like this it is best to be frank. It would be very obvious if you tried to sell some weird pleasantries."

"...Got it."

Somehow, Rudeus is making a face as if he was saved. It seems like I have been of help this time round, though I don't know how it will turn out in the end.

Speaking of which, I wonder how I managed to make such bold statements about something I have never even experienced before? Perhaps this is what I want Dad to tell me when I get married.

...Dad, huh...

How is he now? He must be worried...

"Ah, go ahead, eat up."

"Alright."

For the time being, that ends the sentimental talk. Rudeus and I started reaching out for more takoyaki.

Alright. When I get back, I will definitely eat takoyaki.

If possible, with Dad.

"Hou, looks like you are eating something unusual today."

While having those sentimental thoughts, a certain man arrived at the table. One can feel a majestic aura emanating from his white regalia, a man with silver-grey hair.

It's Perugius.

Behind him follows Sylvaril, as usual.

When Rudeus brings in food, he would always appear like this. As a food connoisseur, he cannot resist trying avant-garde food such as this.

"I shall have some too."

"Please do, please do."

With a face full of smiles, Rudeus served up a plate of takoyaki. Perugius grabbed the fork offered by Sylvaril, got a piece of takoyaki and ate it.

"Hou... I see, this has a cheap taste."

"Well, it's a dish of the common man."

"But this does not taste bad at all... Hmm... there is something cartilage-like inside. What is this?"

Ah...

I wonder how Perugius-sama feels about eating octopuses. In this world, I have never really heard of anyone eating octopus. Even in our previous world, westerners do not really eat octopus. If they found out we fed them octopus, wouldn't they get angry...?

"It's from a *Great Tentacle*."

Rudeus said it simply like that.

"Great... Tentacle... you say?"

Perugius' actions froze. With a stiff facial expression, his gaze fixated on the takoyaki served in front of him. Maybe because of that, the air around Sylvaril changed. She's making a face as if she was saying,

what did you just let Perugius-sama eat?

Hey, the one who said he would eat it first was Perugius...

"Such a nostalgic name."

Unexpectedly, Perugius' expression softened. With a hint of sentimentality, his eyes narrowed. Using the fork, he cut open the takoyaki and took out the octopus meat.

Uwaa... I shouldn't have seen this.

It's green, a green octopus. Red on the surface with green flesh.

"If I recall, you were attacked by one of these and lost all your rations during the laplace war right? The tentacles remaining on deck were then grilled for food."

"Yeah, it was Urupen's idea. Given its color, I thought it was definitely poisonous but surprisingly it was not. Since it was the moments right after a battle, it tasted very good... I see, to think that I would be able to eat this again."

Phew, looks like there wasn't a problem. It seems that Rudeus already had knowledge that Perugius had octopus before. Without anyone noticing, Sylvaril went back to her normal demeanor.

"Sylvaril."

"Yes Sir!"

"Take down the recipe."

"Understood!"

Rudeus muttered something like "I knew you would say that", took out a piece of paper and handed it to her.

"I made these soft and chewy this time, but a way to make the surface crispy

was also written down in the recipe. Please do use it as a reference."

Crispy takoyaki.

Ah, I want to eat it too.

What should I do? Should I request for it?

But requesting it is... it seems a little too overbearing and I don't want to be...

"For Nanahoshi, I will bring some next time."

"... Alright, please do."

Did he learn magic to read my mind?

Nah, if he could read minds then he would not have agonised over the issue of his daughter.

It must be that I am easy to read.

Well, we have known each other for a long time, so it can't be helped.

Still, I'm a little frustrated.

"Hmph... Sylvaril."

"Yes Sir!"

"My throat is dry. Bring us some drinks. Shione's Second Flash, with a few drops of Asuran Wine."

"Understood!"

Before I knew it, Perugia started preparing drinks.

"Oops, my apologies, I wasn't thoughtful enough."

"Your preparations are always one step lacking, Rudeus Greyrat."

"I have no excuses."

Turning around, I see that Sylvaril is moving her hands quickly, preparing tea using the tea set that the room was equipped with. Then, I noticed Armanfi carrying something to our table – three cups of tea, steaming hot and fully prepared, in front of us.

"Please enjoy your tea, it's Shione's Second Flash."

I am served one of the cups.

Takoyaki and red tea. Certainly, there is the aftertaste of the sauce remaining in my mouth and I'm starting to get thirsty... But I feel like these two items won't make a good match. What drink goes well with takoyaki? Cider? Cola?

"Hmm? It's good?"

Sipping it with those thoughts, a gust of spring breeze blew in my mouth. Surprisingly, the taste of the tea did not clash with the intense flavor of the takoyaki sauce and mayonnaise. In fact, it accentuated it. After gulping it down, my mouth feels fresh with only trace amounts of the bonito flakes' aftertaste remaining. I instinctively crave the next bite of takoyaki. It feels like the combination of having milk right after Anpan.⁴

"To have tea that goes well with takoyaki... as expected of Perugius-sama."

"Hmph. That goes without saying. I have experienced food from all sorts of places and time periods. I am different from the likes of

Baglah Haglah⁵ who's interested in only filling his stomach."

When complimented by Rudeus, Perugius puffed out his chest with pride. While Rudeus is an expert at flattery, this is another level of amazing.

Food from our previous world, paired with drinks from this world. There properly exists something that goes well together. In the past, I didn't care so much about that and merely pursued the taste of our original world, huh...

"If you are so inclined, I would even personally pair every meal you bring here with my drinks."

"Ahh, that would be a great help. By all means, please do. I can use it as reference for my food habits going forward."

"Hahaha! Very well!"

Perugius laughed. I have no idea what triggered that reaction, but Sylvaril also seems to be in a good mood, and Rudeus looks relieved. The takoyaki I'm having in this pleasant atmosphere tastes really good.

"Thank you for the food."

Having finished the takoyaki, I joined my hands together to give thanks. The color of the octopus gave me a little shock, but the taste was not bad. Well, it's been a while since I had octopus after all.

By the time I ate my fill, it was sunset. Rudeus is already in making preparations to leave. It seems like we meet just about every other day to me, but it's once a month for him.

"Ah, Nanahoshi."

"Yes?"

"Here, an addition. I thought of some more things I wanted to add. I'll leave it to you."

Lastly, Rudeus handed me a piece of paper. Folded four times, it was a small letter.

"Alright, definitely."

I don't look at the contents, carefully placing this letter into a small pocket that I never let leave my body.

—

When the time came to see Rudeus off, it was completely dark out. As I walked to my room, I thought about today's events.

Lately, it feels like Rudeus has been coming less frequently. As he adds on more years to his age, he too gets saddled with various responsibilities. That's right, age. Compared to when I first met him, he has aged considerably. Rudeus is now 35 years old.

His children too, are becoming adults one by one. That small and cute Lucy-chan is going to get married soon...time goes by too fast. There will come a day where Rudeus will just suddenly stop coming altogether.

Somehow, I feel like I am being left behind.

Ah, that's wrong.

Of course I knew.

It isn't me that is being left behind, it's the opposite.

I am the one that is jumping ahead into the future.

Returning home to our previous world in the end.

When I think about that, I feel a tinge of loneliness. How many more times will I be able to meet Rudeus or Zanoba like this...?

"..."

I patted the small pocket that I never let leave my body. Inside it, contains several letters Rudeus wrote for his family back in the previous world. He writes a new one every few years. He too, is now giving his all, living in this world.

I am deeply indebted to Rudeus. In my life, I will probably never meet another person who would take care of me as much as him. He is someone similar to Dad and Mom.

I don't know whether delivering these letters would suffice as repayment for his kindness. But if I manage to make it home, I will see to it that they are delivered. Then I will tell his family about how he is living properly in this world and how much he took care of me without leaving out a single detail.

"...Alright, I am in your care, Sukeakoto-san."

"Yes."

With my head filled with those thoughts, I once again go back to sleep.

Some translator notes:

1. A kind of fried dumpling containing octopus meat: [Video link](#)



2. Also known as *Benishouga*, they are ginger that is pickled into a red color. You often see these in sushi restaurants, along with the Soy Sauce and Wasabi.

3. Also known as *Agedama*, they are small pellets of crispy fried tempura batter. Often used as toppings in a variety of Japanese dishes: [Video link](#)



4. Bread with red bean paste filling: [Video link](#)



5. It's not strange if you completely forgot about this guy. He is an extremely minor character who appeared in one of the extra chapters in the Main Story, Volume 6. The

chapter name is “The Two Who Met”. You can read that chapter on Baka-tsuki [here](#).

The Last One to Leave the Nest

Chapter 27: Asura Royal Academy Graduation Ceremony

Christina Greyrat is my youngest daughter. In our family of six children, we affectionately call her Chris.

Being the youngest child comes with having to endure unfair treatment. Always being on the lowest priority, the last to choose candies and having hand-me-downs for clothes – such is the fate of the youngest child.

However, Chris was different. Maybe because she was too good at acting cute or due to the fact that the eldest child, Lucy, was keeping the rest of the children in line... Chris was able to avoid the fate of other lastborn children. Not needing to endure much of anything, she grew up leading a carefree life.

Maybe I have spoiled her too much.

Not that i had any intentions to spoil her.

I planned to love all my children equally.

But out of all the kids, it was only Chris that i doted on without restraint.

Lucy and the rest of my children were all afraid of me.

I couldn't understand why at first.

Somehow, it felt like I was being avoided. When they have things on their mind and want someone to confide with, it was mostly with Sylphy or Roxy.

Well if you want advice of course you would go to Sylphy or Roxy...

But aren't there things only shared between men?

Maybe I am hated by my kids? There are days where I mull over things like that.

Last I heard from Sieg, it doesn't seem like I am hated though... I am well respected in the house, thanks to all the effort I've put in till now. My children

are all working hard so as to not disappoint me. Things like coming to me for advice are so absurd to them that it's out of the question.

Naturally, I am happy about it.

It's "Respect" after all.

I can't be unhappy about it.

In my efforts to become a father with dignity, I more or less achieved results like I wanted, after all.

But at the same time, it's kind of lonely...

Even I

want to play catch-ball with my sons on off days, or listen to their troubles over some drinks... Ah – I did the latter with Sieg the other day. I feel bad for Sieg who has this and that on his mind, but it was one of the happiest times I had.

1

Thanks to Sieg, the misunderstanding with Lucy was also cleared up.

I can't thank Sieg enough.

And, amongst the children, only Chris wasn't afraid of me. Speaking of not being afraid, Lara probably wasn't afraid as well. Anyways, Chris was different from the other kids.

She always calls out, "Papa, Papa!" wanting me to spoil her. Kids like Lucy slowly become independent when they enter the Magic University, but Chris remained a Daddy's girl even then.

Just when I thought she'd stop sticking so close to me when she underwent puberty, she still remained the same. Almost everyday, she would talk about what happened in school with a bright smile. When she has issues, she would come to me asking for advice.

Yeah, of course I would end up spoiling her.

With just a bit of pestering, I would have bought cute clothes or other things she wants for her.

It's not like I am giving Chris special treatment. If the other kids wanted me to spoil them, I would have done so in moderation. Because they don't come to me wanting to get spoiled, it ended up with my spoiling Chris a little too much.

Truthfully speaking, I've also been spoiling Lara recently. Just the other day, she came pestering me for a lump of metal, which I prepared for her. Top quality Rudeus-brand metal bars. They're made with earth magic, so rather than metal bars, it would be more accurate to call them lumps of rock... But it's the same quality as the ones used to make my Magic Armor, so it's almost entirely made of metal.

I don't know what she'll be using them for, but since she wanted them, I prepared some for her, to which she said, "Thanks, Papa" in monotone while hugging me.

Lara is, how should I put it... Rather than wanting me to spoil her, she seems to think that I am an easy person...

Well, that's fine.

I don't mind being an easy person.

It's better than not being able to spoil her.

Leaving aside the matter with Lara, now it's about Chris.

To be frank, Chris isn't that outstanding as a kid. Mediocre for swordsmanship, also mediocre for magic. She wasn't slacking off or anything, but she also wasn't that passionate about it either. She wasn't the worst of the kids. Just ordinarily graduating from the Magic University, ordinarily becoming an adult and ordinarily attending the Asura Royal Academy.

In our family, after graduating from the Magic University, children have to attend the Asura Royal Academy. This is so that they become independent. Being left in the real world alone, they have to somehow learn to live.

Life comes with its struggles. No matter what kind of lifestyle we lead, it will have its own share of difficulties.

As with most difficulties, overcoming them is possible, either through personal strength, coming up with tricks or even with aid from the friends and

comrades we made in our journey.

Naturally, included in those ways of overcoming difficulties would be requesting help from our parents. There probably exist young people who don't want to ask for help from their parents, but the option is definitely there.

Well, leaving aside matters of other families, if my children want my help, I will definitely try my best to help them, depending on the nature of the request.

Be that as it may, it's not like I can always be by their side. Though our relationship as parent and child will never change, there are times where it just isn't possible for us to help – for instance, when i have passed away from my limited lifespan.

That's why, in school, where they can keep failing without consequence, they can get as much rehearsal as they want. Solving problems by using their head, moving their body, taking on responsibility for all of their actions.

To be honest, even though I said so much, I am still worried.

That is because Chris is so ordinary, honest to a fault, a crybaby and the most child-like out of my children.

...That crybaby going on with life without my protection, I wonder if she can really do it?

My worries don't end there. Chris has always looked up to dazzling and pure princesses. Even attending the Asura Royal Academy is something she had been looking forward to since a long time ago.

Anyways... Real princesses really do attend the academy and they are indeed dazzling and pure, it's not necessarily untrue. But the Asura Royal Academy is not as simple a place as that. Just like its namesake, it is a simulation for the actual Asura Royal Palace. A whirling mess of conspiracy – well, not to that extent, but power struggles between students are a daily occurrence.

For the time being, I made sure to properly teach her about that, but it falls on her deaf ears. After a moment of looking at me blankly, she laughed while saying, "Papa is such a worrywart!"

Such a timid and spoiled child going into that harsh place with a mistaken

impression... I can't help but keep worrying. Some incident will definitely occur. Just like how Sieg was hit hard by reality, Chris might become a NEET.

Honestly, we don't have to force her through the academy. For example, Lily didn't attend the Asura Royal Academy. Of course, that's because she had a clear path she knew she wanted to go down. Even when she secured employment, she wanted to be taken into apprenticeship of becoming a craftsman. It was only due to her strong determination that I allowed it. Anyways, I didn't want to let Chris attend the academy.

However, even with me opposing it, in the end, I couldn't stop her. She is misunderstood about the academy. Dazzled by the illusion of a pretty and clean Asura Kingdom. She would probably find out soon that it's all a lie and get a huge shock.

But that is all part of life. Lions would toss their cubs into the abyss and tigers would spend ten years training newbies to become villainous wrestlers. It's okay if you fail. Even if you become like Sieg, we will look after you for awhile. Even Sieg spent some time being indecisive at home. In the end, he found the path he wanted to go down as well.

That is why I steeled my resolve and sent Chris on her way. Surely, she will come back home as a mature adult, or so I believed...

No, if you asked me whether I believed that, I actually did not really believe it that much. I thought she would come back crying to me in the first year of the academy.

Instead, contrary to my expectations, she didn't come crying to me. Although there were many complaints in the periodic letters she sent me, there weren't any nasty rumors.

Ahh, she must be doing well.

That's what I thought.

Who would have thought that something like this would happen...

— — —

Asura Royal Academy Graduation Ceremony.

The graduation ceremony happens annually at the Asura Kingdom Royal Palace. Speaking of the graduation ceremony, all graduates are aligned in rows while standing up. Amidst the dignified atmosphere, one can imagine a scene where names of graduates are called out one by one, to receive graduation certificates.

Graduation ceremonies in my past life and in the Magic University probably also felt like this.

However, things at Asura Kingdom seemed to have a slightly different feel to them.

The graduates are gathered inside the castle's huge auditorium and an extravagant party is about to be initiated.

Parties of similar styles like this often occurred inside the castle.

An obligation to be formally dressed up. The orderly lines outside the entrance. Greeting those of a higher social status than you. All of these are seen as an obvious thing to do in the society of Asura Kingdom, and that is exactly what is happening at this moment.

However, this reception party had two differences from the society of Asura Kingdom.

Firstly, the arrangement of having buffet meals while standing.

This arrangement became a common practice after Ariel became queen. The lower to middle aristocracy were praising it, saying "It gives us more chances to interact with people of higher status" while the upper aristocracy gave a different review, saying "This made it easier for us to win over people of lower standing that we had an eye on, denying the edge for other nobles to get ahead of us."

Supremacists and other nobles who couldn't bear with standing due to their obesity were not really happy with this arrangement though...

Either way, it would be no problem if they just host another party in the traditional format. It's all about segregation.

The second difference is that every single graduate present in the ceremony is

deemed to be of equal social status. The students in the Asura Royal Academy come from various different backgrounds. From peasants to nobles, and even the are upper or lower classes of aristocrats within the nobility, there are many levels to the complex social structure.

Even after graduation, the students will differ vastly in their future endeavours. Some will go on to become knights, government officials or maids. Some will be married off to a foreign country and others will become feudal lords and succeed their parents in governing a small piece of territory.

But at the ceremony itself, everyone is equal. They are given the social status of “Graduate” and are allowed to remain standing even in the presence of royalty. Even if you are born in a slum, stole as a kid and had no ambitions after graduation, if you entered this school and survived the entire process, you would be “Graduate” today.

To manifest this equality, everyone was given extravagant ceremonial attire that no peasant could ever hope to afford.

It was packaged such wherever they go, they would not be embarrassed to be recognised as a graduate of the Asura Royal Academy.

Only for tonight, they enjoy a special social position.

They are the guests of honor and have the spotlight for tonight.

Of course, hierarchy still exists among the student population, so they are not necessarily treated the same.

Grades, popularity, contributions to school events... It would have been fine if that was all that mattered. However, if one were to be frank, the social status of a family is what really matters when it comes to determining the hierarchy.

While equality is constantly being emphasized, it was only for appearance’s sake.

Either way, seeing how the graduates would lose their identity as graduates and return to their formal social status the next day, it couldn’t be helped that this was the case.

Differences in social status are callous and unforgiving like that.

Now, the top of the hierarchy.

Among the student population, the most superior. The one who garners the most attention, and contributed the most to school events. Furthermore, the one who carries the lineage of the upper aristocracy.

One such person is now at the graduation party making a speech.

A speech representing all the school graduates.

As it is called, a commencement speech.

This graduation party is attended by Asura kingdom's well-known aristocrats.

Among them, without a doubt is Ariel Anemoi Asura, the Queen of Asura Kingdom.

Being able to give a speech on how well-performed you are, and how much you have contributed to the kingdom in front of the queen.

It is a role of great honor.

Yet, it is just not for the honour alone. It is also a chance for the upper aristocrats to remember your name, and to show them how superior your house is.

That is why, for the parents who are heavily involved in the power struggle happening in the royal palace, they have placed a great deal of expectation on their kids.

They repeatedly emphasize to their kids, time and time again, the importance of being the top student – and kids, being kids, will try to live up to the expectations of their parents.

In order to attain excellent grades that will not bring shame to one's family and allow one to confidently graduate from the academy, one has to be earnest; be it in their studies, school events or even in recruiting allies into their factions.

Of course, their parents' expectations are not the only reason to strive for the top seat.

There is a good chance that people recruited into their factions would

become retainers in their family after graduation. Also, it serves as good practice for those in the ensuing power struggle happening in the royal palace.

Being able to take over the top seat also meant that one could work in essential departments in the Asura Kingdom.

Of course, any student with ambition would strive to be the top student regardless of whether their parents were involved or not.

The one who emerged victorious from this intense competition and became the graduate representative was a single young lady.

The eldest daughter from the Asura Yellowsnake family, Viola Yellowsnake.

The Yellowsnake family might not match up to the Greyrats of the four feudal lords in terms of pedigree, but they hold an important post as the managers of the treasury of the Asura Kingdom. They exist to help manage the finances of the country.

In terms of their status, there is nothing to complain about, and no one had any qualms about her holding the post of the graduate representative.

The head of the Yellowsnake house was also extremely proud that his own daughter was able to attain the top rank of the school even in face of competition from the Greyrats or even royalty.

Viola is a beautiful young lady.

Her characteristic brownish-blond hair was tied up in a braid.. What endowed her body was a deep red dress.

Usually, her thin, slightly pointed eyes leave others with a mean impression of her, yet at the speech her eyes displayed a dignified gleam.

Her manner of speech was bold, and you could tell she was used to speaking in front of a crowd.

Impressive.

" — — From now on, the ability, knowledge and experience acquired from school will be used diligently to contribute to the country. Glory to the Asura Kingdom!"

Her speech ended without any problems and the audience unanimously gave a loud applause. That signals the end of the graduate representative address. What's left is just for Her Majesty Ariel to give her congratulatory address, a toast with Viola with ceremonial music in the background and it will be time for food, dance and small talk. Then I will be able to go over to Chris and give my blessings. While I have those thoughts, I can't help but let loose a smile. Chris probably also has her position to consider, so I have to greet her with my smartest face. As I was lost in those thoughts, something unbelievable happened.

"... However, there is someone that is unworthy of being called a graduate from the venerable Asura Royal Academy."

Viola continued talking. The speech has ended, but it seems that she still has some things she has to let off her chest... Even though she was delaying Ariel's congratulatory address that's happening right after this. She actually did something so disrespectful, but Ariel only made a surprised face while being silent. Since Viola wasn't reprimanded, she continued what she was about to say.

Viola began exposing all the evil deeds that person has done right from the beginning.

She started the story with trivial harassment, like placing needles on shoes on the day of the dance event, destroying the textbooks of students of higher grades.

She raised her grades by selling favors and engaging in flattery with the teachers. Also, she arranged for students of lower social status to sneak into the staff room and steal the test answers. How cunning!

She bullied the female students who lost their home and used her large entourage of male admirers to boss people around. Undeniably an underhanded, evil and unpleasant person.

She fed a stray dog that wandered into campus grounds and built a doghouse at the back of the school. She even crushed a cockroach that came out of the staff room with her bare hands. The speech also included things that didn't make much sense like this as well.

"To kick down others, to give evil such a high evaluation, are such actions appropriate for a graduate from the honorable Asura Royal Academy?"

While carrying herself like she was in a performance, she looked at her surroundings. There sat the highest nobility of the Asura Kingdom. In response to her words, they frowned and began saying things like, "Outrageous!" or "If that's true, then it is unacceptable that this person is allowed to graduate!"

Well, the so-called evil deeds she brought up are daily occurrences in the Asura Royal Palace, but the nobles continued to comment about this evildoer. Reason being, if people are caught committing crimes in the royal palace, they would be severely punished. In other words, committing crimes without getting caught is their brand of justice.

Viola's gaze was directed towards the deepest parts of where the Asura Nobility were. There sat the Queen of this country, Ariel. Towards Viola's stream of accusations and exposure of this evildoer's crimes, she listened while keeping quiet.

When Viola looked directly at Ariel, the gazes of the crowd naturally shifted towards Ariel. Following that, the noisy crowd gradually started to settle down. When silence returned to the audience hall, Ariel opened her mouth.

"What is the name of that person?"

Those were quiet words, but for some reason it resounded clearly throughout the audience hall. Viola raised the corners of her mouth without her realising it, and pointed towards a certain place in the venue.

"That person..."

There lies the figure of a girl who had already started eating chicken nuggets with her fingers before the toast was done. Right beside her was a docile girl with brown hair who hurriedly tried to wipe the nugget-eating girl's mouth.

Opposite of the nugget-eating girl, with a table between them was a handsome guy acting as if he was saying, "Already? What am I going to do with you..." Beside the brown-haired docile girl was another handsome guy with a wry smile. And...

Wait, around that nugget-eating girl, there's somehow a lot of handsome

guys.

Could it be that she's really popular?

"Is Christina Greyrat!"

"Hm?"

In response to the stares coming from the entire audience hall, she only showed a blank face.

Some translator notes:

1. Events that happened in Jobless Oblige. I only recalled while translating this arc, but this arc occurs after Jobless Oblige. Personally I do not think any information here will spoil the enjoyment of Jobless Oblige so I will continue to finish up this arc.